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R. D. Blackmore

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PERLYCROSS.

A TALE OF THE WESTERN HILLS.

BY

R. D. BLACKMORE,

AUTHOR OF "LORNA DOONE," "SPRINGHAVEN," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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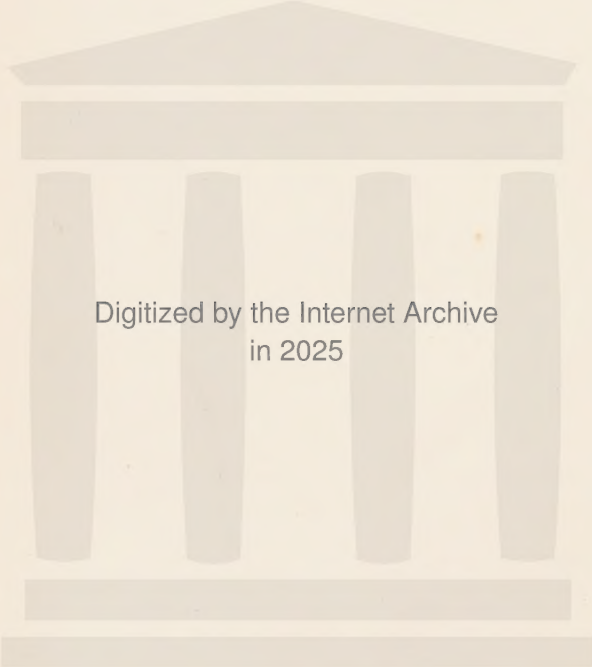
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PERLYCROSS.

CHAPTER I.

A GREAT PRIZE.

ONE of the beauties of this world is, for the many who are not too good for it, that they never can tell what may turn up next, and need not over-exert themselves in the production of novelty, because somebody will be sure to do it for them. And those especially who have the honour and pleasure of dealing with the gentler sex are certain, without any effort of their own, to encounter plenty of vicissitude.

Such was the fortune of Dr. Fox, when he called that day at Walderscourt. He found his sweet Nicie in a sad condition, terribly depressed, and anxious, in consequence of a long interview with her mother, which had been as follows.

For the last fortnight, or three weeks, Lady

Waldron had not recovered strength, but fallen away even more, declining into a peculiar and morbid state. Sometimes gloomy, downcast, and listless, secluding herself, and taking very little food, and no exercise whatever; at other times bewildered, excited, and restless, beginning a sentence and breaking it off, laughing about nothing, and then morose with every one. Pretty Tamar Haddon had a great deal to put up with, and probably would not have shown the needful patience, except for handsome fees lightly earned by reports collected in the village. But Sergeant Jakes being accessible no more—for he had cast off the spell in the Abbey, that Sunday—poor Lady Waldron's anxiety was fed with tales of very doubtful authority. And the strange point was that she showed no impatience at the tardiness of the enquiry now, but rather a petulant displeasure at its long continuance.

Now that very morning, while Fox was on the road to call upon his beloved, she was sent for suddenly by her mother, and hastened with some anxiety to the room which the widow now left so seldom. Inez had long been familiar with the truth that her mother's love for her was not too ardent; and she often tried—but without much success—to believe

that the fault was on her part. The mother ascribed it very largely to some defect in her daughter's constitution. "She has not one drop of Spanish blood in her. She is all of English, except perhaps her eyes; and the eyes do not care to see things of Spain." Thus she justified herself, unconscious perhaps that jealousy of the father's love for this pet child had been, beyond doubt, the first cause of her own estrangement.

This terribly harassed and lonely woman (with no one but God to comfort her, and very little sense of any consolation thus) was now forsaken by that support of pride and strength of passion, which had enabled her at first to show a resolute front to affliction. Leaning back upon a heavy couch, she was gazing without much interest at the noble ivory crucifix, which had once so strongly affected her, but now was merely a work of art, a subject for admiration perhaps, but not for love or enthusiasm. Of these there was no trace in her eyes, only apathy, weariness, despondence.

"Lock the outer door. I want no spies," she said in a low voice which alarmed her daughter; "now come and sit close to me in this chair. I will speak in my own language. None but you and I understand it here now"

"It is well, mother mine," replied her daughter, speaking also in Spanish; "but I wish it were equally well with you."

"It will never be well with me again, and the time will be long before it can be well with you. I have doubted for days about telling you, my child, because I am loth to grieve you. But the silence upon this matter is very bitter to me; moreover it is needful that you should know, in case of my obtaining the blessed release, that you also be not triumphed over. It is of that unholy outrage I must speak. Long has it been a black mystery to us. But I understand it now—alas, I cannot help understanding it!"

Inez trembled exceedingly; but her mother, though deadly pale, was calm. Both face and voice were under stern control, and there were no dramatic gestures.

"Never admit him within these doors, if I am not here to bar them. Never take his hand, never listen to his voice, never let your eyes rest upon his face. Never give him a crust, though he starve in a ditch; never let him be buried with holy rites. As he has treated my dear husband, so shall God treat him, when he is dead. It is for this reason that I tell you. If you loved your father, remember it."

“But who is it, mother? What man is this, who has abandoned his soul to the Evil One? Make me sure of his name, that I may obey you.”

“The man who has done it is my own twin-brother, Rodrigo, Count de Varcas; Rodrigo, the accursed one.”

The Spanish lady clasped her hands, and fell back against the wall, and dropped her eyes; as if the curse were upon her also, for being akin to the miscreant. Her daughter could find no words, and was in doubt of believing her own ears.

“Yes, I know well what I am saying;” Lady Waldron began again with some contempt. “I am strong enough. Offer me nothing to smell. Shall I never die? I ought to have died, before I knew this, if there were any mercy in Heaven. That my twin-brother, my own twin-brother, the one I have loved and laboured for, and even insulted my own good husband, because he would not bow down to him—not for any glory, revenge, or religion, but for the sake of grovelling money—oh Inez, my child, that he should have done this!”

“But how do you know that he has done it? Has he made any confession, mother? Surely it is possible to hope against it, unless he himself has said so.”

“He has not himself said so. He never does. To accuse himself is no part of his habits, but rather to blame every other. And such is his manner that every one thinks he must be right, and his enemies wrong. But to those who have experience of him, the question is often otherwise. You remember that very—very faithful gentleman, who came to us, about a month ago?”

“Mother, can you mean that man, arrogant but low, who consumed all my dear father’s boxes of cigars, and called himself Señor José Quevedo, and expected even me to salute him as of kin?”

“Hush, my child! He is your Uncle’s foster-brother, and trusted by him in everything. You know that I have in the Journals announced my desire to hear from my beloved brother—beloved alas too much, and vainly. I was long waiting, I was yearning, having my son in the distance, and you who went against me in everything, to embrace and be strengthened by my only brother. What other friend had I on earth? And in answer to my anxiety arrives that man, sedate, mysterious, not to be doubted, but regarded as a lofty cavalier. I take him in, I trust him, I treat him highly, I remember him as with my brother always in

the milky days of childhood, although but the son of a well-intentioned peasant. And then I find what? That he has come for money—for money, which has always been the bane of my only and well-born brother, for the very dismal reason that he cannot cling to it, and yet must have both hands filled with it for ever. Inez, do you attend to me?”

“Mother, I am doing so, with all my ears; and with all my heart as well I heed. But these things surprise me much, because I have always heard from you that my Uncle Rodrigo was so noble, so chivalrous, so far above all Englishmen, by reason of the grandeur of his spirit.”

“And in that style will he comport himself, upon most of life’s occasions, wherein money does not act as an impediment. Of that character is he always, while having more than he can spend of it. But let him see the necessity, and the compulsion to deny himself, too near to him approaching, and he will not possess that loftiness of spirit, and benevolence universal. Departing from his larger condition of mind, he will do things which honour does not authorise. Things unworthy of the mighty Barcas, from whom he is descended. But the Barcas have often been strong and

wicked; which is much better than weak and base."

Her ladyship paused, as in contemplation of the sterling nobility of her race, and apparently derived some comfort from the strong wickedness of the Barcas.

"Mother, I hope that it is not so." Nicie's view of excellence was milder. "You are strong, but never wicked. I am not strong; but on the other hand, I trust, that I am not weak and base."

"You never can tell what you can do. You may be most wicked of the wicked yet. Those English girls, that are always good, are braised vegetables without pepper. The only one I ever saw to approve, was the one who was so rude to me. How great her indignation was! She is worthy to be of Andalusia."

"But why should so wicked a thing be done—so horrible even from a stranger?" The flashing of Nicie's dark eyes was not unworthy of Andalusia. "How could the meanest greed of money be gratified by such a deed?"

"In this manner, if I understand aright. During the time of the French invasion, just before our marriage, the Junta of our City had to bear a great part of the burden of supporting

and paying our brave troops. They fell into great distress for money, which became scarcer and scarcer, from the terrible war, and the plundering. All lovers of their country came with both hands full of treasure; and among them my father contributed a loan of noble magnitude, which has impaired for years to come the fortunes of our family. For not a *peseta* will ever be repaid, inasmuch as there was no security. When all they could thus obtain was spent, and the richest men would advance no more, without prospect of regaining it, the Junta (of which my father was a member) contrived that the City should combine with them in pledging its revenues, which were large, to raise another series of loans. And to obtain these with more speed, they appealed to the spirit of gambling; which is in the hearts of all men, but in different forms and manners.

“One loan that was promulgated thus amounted to 100,000 dollars, contributed in twenty shares of 5,000 dollars each; and every share was to have a life, of not less than fifteen years in age, appointed to represent it. No money was to be repaid; but the interest to accumulate, until nineteen out of those twenty lives became extinct, and thereupon the whole

was to go to the last survivor; and by that time it would be a very large sum. I believe that the scheme came from the French, who are wonderfully clever in such calculations; whereas finance is not of us. Do you seem to yourself to understand it?"

"Not very much, but to some extent. I have read of a wheel of life; and this appears to me to be a kind of wheel of death."

"So it is, my child. You can scarcely be so stupid, as you have been described to me. I am not too strong of the arithmetic science, though in other ways not wanting. You will see, that there was a royal treasure thus, increasing for the one who should deserve it, by having more of life than the nineteen others, and acquiring it thus, for the time he had to come. That kind of lottery, coming from Paris, was adopted by other Governments, under the title of *Tontine*, I think. My dear father, who was a warm patriot, but unable to contribute more without hope of return, accepted two of those five thousand dollar shares, and put into one the name of my brother, and into the other that of my dear husband, then about to be; because those two were young, while himself was growing old. Your father has spoken to me of his share, several

times, as it became of greater value; and he provided for it in his will, supposing that he should ever become the possessor, although he approved not of any kind of gambling.

“If you can represent to yourself that scheme, you will see that each share was enlarged in prospect, as the others failed of theirs by death; and, of the twenty lives appointed, the greater part vanished rapidly; many by war, and some by duels, and others by accident and disease: until it appears—though we knew it not—that your father, and your Uncle Rodrigo, were the sole survivors. Your father and I kept no watch upon it, being at such a distance; but now I have learned that your Uncle has been exceedingly acute and vigilant, having no regard for your dear father, and small affection, I fear, for me; but a most passionate devotion to the huge treasure now accumulated upon heavy interest, and secured by the tolls of the City.

“I am grieved by discovering from this man Quevedo, that your Uncle has been watching very keenly everything that has happened here; he has employed an agent, whose name I could not by any means extort from Quevedo, and not contented with his reports, but excited by the tidings of your father’s ill-health, he has

even been present in these parts himself, to reconnoitre for himself; for he is capable of speaking English, even better than I do. Quevedo is very cautious; but by plying him with Spanish wine, such as he cannot procure in Spain, feigning also to be on his side, I extorted from him more than he wished to part with. No suspicion had I, while he was here, that his master was guilty of the black disgrace thus inflicted upon us; or can you imagine that I would allow that man to remain in the house of the outraged one? And Quevedo himself either feigns, or possesses, total ignorance of this vile deed."

"But, mother dear, how did this suspicion grow upon you? And for what purpose—if I may inquire—was that man, Quevedo, sent to you?"

"He was sent with two objects. To obtain my signature to an attested declaration as to the date of your father's death; and in the second place to borrow money for the support of your Uncle's claim. It could not be expected that the City would discharge so vast a sum (more than five hundred thousand crowns they say) without interposing every possible obstacle and delay; and our family, through your Uncle's conduct, has lost all the influence it possessed

when I was young. I am pleased to think now that he must be disappointed with the very small sum which I advanced, in my deep disgust at discovering, that at the very time when I was sighing and languishing for his support, he was at my very doors, but through his own selfish malignity avoided his twin sister. Quevedo meant not to have told me that. But alas! I extorted it from him, after a slip of his faithful tongue. For you know, I believe, that your father and uncle were never very friendly. My brother liked not that I should wed an Englishman; all men of this nation he regarded with contempt, boasting as they did in our country, where we permitted them to come and fight. But you have never been told, my child, that the scar upon your dear father's face was inflicted by your Uncle's sword, employed (as I am ashamed to confess) in an unfair combat. Upon recovering from the stealthy blow, your father in his great strength could have crushed him to death, for he was then a stripling; but for my sake he forbore. It has been concealed from you. There is no concealment now."

"Oh, mother, how savage and ignominious also! I wonder that you ever could desire to behold such a man again; and that you could

find it in your heart to receive his envoy kindly."

"Many years have passed since then, my child. And we have a saying, 'To a fellow-countryman forgive much, and to a brother everything.' Your father had forgiven him, before the wound was healed. Much more slowly did I forgive. And, but for this matter, never would I have spoken."

"Oh, mother dear, you have had much sorrow! I have never considered it, as I should have done. A child is like an egg, as you say in Spain, that demands all the warmth for itself, and yields none. Yet am I surprised, that knowing so much of him, you still desired his presence, and listened to the deceits of his messenger. But you have wisdom; and I have none. Tell me then what he had to gain, by an outrage hateful to a human being, and impossible to a Christian."

"It is not clear, my child, to put it to your comprehension. The things that are of great power with us are not in this Country so copious. We are loftier. We are more friendly with the Great Powers that reside above. In every great enterprise, we feel what would be their own sentiments; though not to be explained by heretical logic. Your Uncle has never been

devoted to the Church, and has profited little by her teaching; but he is not estranged from her so much, that he need in honour hesitate to have use and advantage from her charitable breast. For she loves every one, even those who mock her, with feeble imitation of her calls."

"Mother, but hitherto you have cared little or nothing for Holy Church. You have allowed me to wander from her; and my mind is the stronger for the exercise. Why then this new zeal and devotion?"

"Inez, the reason is very simple; although you may not understand it yet. We love the Institutions that make much of us, even when we are dead, and comfort our bodies with ceremonies, and the weepers with reasons for smiling. This heretic corporation, to which Mr. Penniloe belongs, has many good things imitated from us; but does not understand itself. Therefore, it is not a power in the land, to govern the law, or to guide great actions of property and of behaviour, as the Holy Catholic Church can do, in the lands where she has not been deposed. Knowing how such things are with us, your Uncle (as I am impelled to believe), having plenty of time for preparation, had arranged to make

one master-stroke, towards this great object of his life. At once to bring all the Ecclesiastics to his side with fervour, and before the multitude to prove his claim in a manner the most dramatic.

“Behold it thus, as upon a stage! The whole City is agitated with the news, and the immensity of his claim. The young men say that it is just to pay it, if it can be proved, for the honour of the City. But the old men shake their heads, and ask where is the money to come from; what new tolls can be imposed; and who can believe a thing, that must be proved by the oaths of foreign heretics?

“Lo there appears the commanding figure of the Count de Varcas before the great Cathedral doors; behind him a train of sailors bear the body of the great British warrior, well-known among the elder citizens by his lofty stature and many wounds, renowned among the younger as a mighty hero. The Bishop, Archbishop, and all powers of the Church (being dealt with privately beforehand) are moved to tears by this Act of Grace, this manifest conversion of a noble Briton, claiming the sacred rites of *Campo Santo*, and not likely to enjoy them without much munificence, when that most righteous claim upon

the Seculars is paid. Dares any one to doubt identity? Behold, upon the finger of the departed one, is the very ring with which the City's benefactor sealed his portion of the covenant; and which he presented to his son-in-law, as a holy relic of his ancient family, upon betrothal to his daughter!

"Thereupon arises the universal cry—'redeem the honour of the City.' A few formalities still remain: one of which is satisfied by the arrival of Quevedo with my deposition. The noble Count, the descendant of the Barcas, rides in a chariot extolled by all, and scatters a few *pesetas* of his half a million dollars. It was gained by lottery, it goes by gambling; in six months he is penniless again. He has robbed his brother's grave in vain. For another hundred dollars, he would rob his twin-sister's."

"Oh, mother, it is horrible! Too horrible to be true. And yet how it clears up everything! And even so, how much better it is, than what we supposed, and shuddered at! But have you any evidence beyond suspicion? If it is not unbecoming, I would venture to remind you, that you have already in your mind condemned another, whose innocence is now established."

“Nay, not established, except to minds that are, like mine, full of charity. It is not impossible, that he may have joined my brother—oh that I should call him so!—in this abominable enterprise. I say it not, to vex you in your lofty faith. But it would have made that enterprise far easier to arrange. And if a noble Spaniard can stoop thus, why should not a common Englishman?”

“Because he is a gentleman;” cried Nicie, rising with a flash of indignation, “which a nobleman sometimes is not. And since you have spoken thus, I doubt the truth of your other accusation. But that can very soon be put to the test, by making enquiry on the spot. If what you suppose has happened at all, it must be of public knowledge there. Have you sent any one to enquire about it?”

“Not yet. I have not long seen things clearly. Only since that Quevedo left, it has come upon me by reasoning. Neither do I know of any trusty person. It must be one faithful to the family, and careful of its reputation; for the disgrace shall never be known in this cold England. Remember therefore, I say, that you speak no word, not even to Mr. Penniloe, or Dr. Fox, of this conclusion forced upon me. If in justice to others we are com-

pelled to avow that the deed was of the family, we must declare that it was of piety and high religious feeling, and strictly conceal that it was of sordid lucre."

"But mother, they may in the course of their own enquiries discover how it was at last. The last things ascertained tend that way. And if they should find any trace of ship——"

"I have given orders to drop all further searches. And you must use your influence with—with all you have any sway upon, that nothing more shall be done at present. Of course you will not supply the reason; but say that it has been so arranged. Now go, my child; I have talked too long. My strength is not as it was, and I dwell most heavily on the better days. But one thing I would enjoin upon you. Until I speak again of that which I have seen in my own mind, to its distress and misery, ask me no more about it, neither in any way refer to it. The Lord,—who is not of this Church, or that, but looks down upon us from the Crucifix,—He can pity and protect us. But you will be glad that I have told you this; because it will devour me the less."

CHAPTER II.

PLEADINGS.

“BUT it will devour me the more. My mother cannot love me;” the poor girl was obliged to think, as she sat in her lonely room again. “She has laid this heavy burden on me; and I am to share it with no one. Does she suppose that I feel nothing, and am wholly absorbed in love-proceedings, forgetting all duty to my father? Sometimes I doubt almost whether Jemmy Fox is worthy of my affection. I am not very precious. I know that—the lesson is often impressed upon me—but I know that I am simple, and loving, and true; and he takes me too much for granted. If he were noble, and could love with all his heart, would he be so hard upon his sister, for liking a man, who is her equal in everything but money? The next time I see him, I will try him about that. If a man is noble, as I understand the word, he will be noble for others, as well as for himself.

Uncle Penniloe is the only real nobleman I know: because to him others are equal to himself."

This was only a passing mood, and not practical enough to be permanent. However it was the prevailing one, when in came Jemmy Fox himself. That young doctor plumed himself upon his deep knowledge of the fairer sex; and yet like the rest of mankind who do so, he showed little of that knowledge in his dealings with them.

In the midst of so many doubts and fears, and with a miserable sense of loneliness, Miss Waldron was in "a high-strung condition"—as ladies themselves describe it—though as gentle and affectionate as ever. She was gazing at little pet *Pixie*, and wondering in her self-abasement, whether there is any human love so deep, devoted, and everlasting (while his little life endures) as that of an ordinary dog. *Pixie*, the pug-dog, sitting at her feet was absorbed in wistful watching, too sure that his mistress was plunged in trouble, beyond the reach of his poor mind, but not perhaps beyond the humble solace of such a yearning heart.

In this interchange of tender feelings, a still more tender vein was touched. "Squeak!" went *Pixie*, with a jump, and then a long

eloquence of yelp and howl proved that he partook too deeply of the woe he had prayed to share. A heavy riding-boot had crushed his short but sympathetic tail—the tail he was so fond of chasing as a joyful vision, but now too mournfully and materially his own!

Dr. Fox, with a cheerful smile, as if he had done something meritorious, gazed into Nicie's sparkling eyes. Perhaps he expected a lovely kiss, after his long absence.

"Why, you don't seem to care a bit for what you have done!" cried the young girl, almost repelling him. "Allow me to go to my wounded little dear. Oh you poor little persecuted pet, what did they do to you? Was his lovely taily broken? Oh the precious little martyr, that he should have come to this! Did a monstrous elephant come, and crush his darling life out? Give his Missy a pretty kiss, with the great tears rolling on his cheek."

"Well, I wish you'd make half as much fuss about me;" said Fox, with all the self-command that could well be expected. "You haven't even asked me how I am!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon then;" she answered, looking up at him, with the little dog's nose cuddled into her neck, and his short sobs puffing up the golden undergrowth of her

darkly-clustering hair. "Yes, to be sure, I should have asked that. It was very forgetful of me. But his poor tail seems to be a little easier now; and the vigour of your step shows how well you have come back to us."

"Well, more than welcome, I am afraid. I can always make allowance for the humours of young ladies; and I know how good and sweet you are. But I think you might have been glad to see me."

"Not when you tread upon my dear dog's tail, and laugh in my face afterwards, instead of being very sorry. I should have begged pardon, if I had been so clumsy as to tread upon a dog of yours."

"Dogs are all very well, in their way; but they have no right to get into our way. This poor little puggie's tail is all right now. Shake hands, Puggie. Why, look! He has forgiven me."

"That shows how wonderfully kind he is, and how little he deserves to be trodden on. But I will not say another word about that; only you might have been sorrier. Their consciences are so much better than ours. He is licking your hand, as if he had done the wrong. Your sister agreed with me about their nobility. How is darling Christie?"

"Everybody is a darling, except me to-day! Christie is well enough. She always is; except when she goes a cropper out of a trap, and knocks young men's waistcoat-buttons off."

"How coarsely you put it, when you ought to be most thankful to the gentleman who rescued her, when you left her at the mercy of a half-wild horse!"

"I don't know what to make of you to-day, Miss Waldron. Have I done anything to offend you? You are too just and sensible, and—gentle, I should like to say—not to know that you have put an entirely wrong construction upon that little accident with Farrant's old screw. It was Christie's own fault, every bit of it. She thought herself a grand whip, and she came to grief; as girls generally do, when they are bumptious."

"You seem to have a great contempt for girls, Dr. Fox. What have the poor things done, to offend you so?"

"Somebody must have been speaking against me. I'd give a trifle to know who it is. I have always been accustomed to reasonable treatment."

"There now, his dear little tail is better! Little *Pixie* loves me so. Little *Pixie* never

tells somebody that she is an unreasonable creature. Little *P'arie* is too polite for that."

"Well, I think I had better be off for the day. I have heard of people getting out of bed the wrong side; and you can't make it right all the day, when that has happened. Miss Waldron, I must not go away without saying that my sister sends you her very best love. I was to be sure to remember that."

"Oh thank you, Dr. Fox! Your sister is always so very sweet and considerate. And I hope she has also been allowed to send it where it is due, a thousand times as much as here."

"Where can that be? At the rectory, I suppose. Yes, she has not forgotten Mr. Penniloe. She is not at all fickle in her likings."

"Now that is a very fine quality indeed, as well as a very rare one. And another she has, and will not be driven from it; and I own that I quite agree with her. She does not look down upon other people, and think that they belong to another world, because they are not so well off in this one as she is. A gentleman is a gentleman, in her judgment, and is not to be cast by, after many kind acts, merely because he is not made of money."

"Ah now I see what all this comes to!" exclaimed Fox, smiling pleasantly. "Well, I am quite open to a little reasoning there, because the whole thing is so ridiculous. Now put it to yourself; how would you like to be a sort of son-in-law to good Mother Gilham's green coal-scuttle? A coal-scuttle should make one grateful, you will say. Hear, hear! not at all a bad pun that; though quite involuntary."

"The bonnet may be behind the age, or in front of it, I know not which;" said Nicie, very resolute to show no smile; "but a better and sweeter old face never looked——"

"A better horse never looked out of a bridle. It is bridle, and blinkers, and saddle, all in one."

"It is quite useless trying to make me laugh." Her voice however belied her; and *Pixie* watching her face began to wag the wounded tail again. "Your sister, who knows what bonnets are, to which you can have no pretension, is well acquainted with the sterling value——"

"Oh come, I am sure it would not fetch much now, though it may have cost two guineas, or more, in the days before 'my son Frank' was born."

"Really, Jemmy, you are too bad, when I want to talk seriously."

“So long as I am ‘Jemmy’ once more, I don’t care how bad I am.”

“That was a slip. But you must listen to me. I will not be laughed off from saying what I think. Do you suppose that it is a joking matter for poor Frank Gilham?”

“I don’t care a copper for his state of mind, if Chris is not fool enough to share it. The stupid fellow came to me this morning, and instead of trying to smooth me down, what does he do but blow me up sky-high! You should have heard him. He never swore at all, but gave utterance to the noblest sentiments—just because they were in his favour.”

“Then I admire him for it. It was very manly of him. Why were all large ideas in his favour? Just because the small ones are on your side. I suppose, you pretend to care for me?”

“No pretence about it. All too true. And this is what I get done to me!”

“But how would you like my brother to come, and say—‘I disapprove of Dr. Fox. I forbid you to say another word to him’? Would you recognize his fraternal right in the matter, and go away quietly?”

“Hardly that. I should leave it to you.

And if you held by me, I should snap my fingers at him."

"Of course you would. And so would anybody else; Frank Gilham among the number. And your sister—is she to have no voice, because you are a roaring lion? Surely her parents, and not her brother, should bar the way, if it must be barred. Just think of yourself, and ask yourself how your own law would fit you."

"The cases are very different, and you know it as well as I do. Frank Gilham is quite a poor man; and, although he is not a bad kind of fellow, his position in the world is not the same as ours."

"That may be so. But if Christie loves him, and is quite content with his position in the world, and puts up with the coal-scuttle—as you call it—and he is a good man and true, and a gentleman, are they both to be miserable, to please you? And more than that—you don't know Christie. If Frank Gilham shows proper courage, and is not afraid of mean imputations, no one will ask your leave, I think."

"Well, I shall have done my best; and if I cannot stop it, let them rue the day. Her father and mother would never allow it; and

as I am responsible for the whole affair, and cannot consult them, as things are now, I am bound to act in their place, I think. But never mind that. One may argue for ever, and a girl in a moment can turn the tables on the cleverest man alive. Let us come back to our own affairs. I have some news which ought to please you. By rare good luck I have hit upon the very two men, who were employed upon that awful business. I shall have them soon, and then we shall know all about this most mysterious case. By George, it shall go hard indeed with the miscreant who plotted it."

"Oh don't—oh don't! What good can it be?" cried Nicie, trembling, and stammering. "It will kill my mother; I am sure it will. I implore you not to go on with it."

"What!" exclaimed Fox with amazement. "You to ask me, you his only daughter, to let it be so—to hush up the matter—to submit to this atrocious wrong! And your father—it is the last thing I ever should have thought to hear."

In shame and terror she could not speak, but quailed before his indignant gaze, and turned away from him with a deep low sob.

"My darling, my innocent dear," he cried in alarm at her bitter anguish; "give me your

hand; let me look at your face. I know that no power on earth would make you do a thing that you saw to be shameful. I beg your pardon humbly, if I spoke too harshly. You know that I would not vex you, Inez; and beyond any doubt you can explain this strange—this inconceivable thing. You are sure to have some good reason for it.”

“Yes, you would say so, if you knew all. But not now—I dare not; it is too dreadful. It is not for myself. If I had my own way—but what use? I dare not even tell you that. For the present, at least for the present, do nothing. If you care about me at all, I beg you not to do what would never be forgiven. And my mother is in such a miserable state, so delicate, so frail, and helpless! Do for my sake, do show this once, that you have some affection for me.”

Nicie put her soft hand on his shoulder, and pleaded her cause with no more words, but a gaze of such tenderness and sweet faith, that he could not resist it. Especially as he saw his way to reassure her, without departing from the plan he had resolved upon.

“I will do anything, my pretty dove,” he said with a noble surrender; “to relieve your precious and trustful heart. I will even do

this, if it satisfies you—I will take no steps for another month, an entire month from this present time. I cannot promise more than that, now can I, for any bewitchment? And in return you must pledge yourself to give your mother not even a hint of what I have just told you. It would only make her anxious, which would be very bad for her health, poor thing; and she has not the faith in me, that you have. She must not even dream that I have heard of those two villains.”

This was a bright afterthought of his; for if Lady Waldron should know of his discovery, she might contrive to inform them, that he had his eye upon them.

“Oh, how good you are!” cried Nicie. “I can never thank you enough, dear Jemmy; and it must appear so cruel of me, to ask you to forego so long the chance of shaming those low people, who have dared to belie you so.”

“What is a month, compared to you?” Jemmy asked, with real greatness. “But if you feel any obligation, you know how to reward me, dear.”

Nicie looked at him, with critical eyes; and then as if reckless of anything small, flung both arms round his neck, and kissed him.

“Oh it is so kind, so kind of him!” she declared to herself, to excuse herself; while he thought it was very kind of her. And she, being timid of her own affection, loved him all the more for not encroaching on it.

Jemmy rode away in a happy frame of mind. He loved that beautiful maiden, and he was assured of her love for him. He knew that she was far above him, in the gifts of nature, and the bloom that beautifies them—the bloom that is not of the cheeks alone, but of the gentle dew of kindness, and the pearl of innocence. Fox felt a little ashamed of himself, for a trifle of sharp practice; but his reason soon persuaded him, that his conscience was too ticklish. And that is a thing to be stopped at once.

While jogging along in this condition, on the road towards Pumpington, he fell in with another horseman less inclined to cheerfulness. This was Farmer Stephen Horner, a younger brother of Farmer John, a less substantial, and therefore perhaps more captious agriculturist. He was riding a very clever cob, and looked both clever and smart himself, in his bottle-green cutaway coat, red waistcoat, white cord breeches, and hard brown hat. Striking into the turnpike road from a grass-track skirting

the Beacon Hill, he hailed the Doctor, and rode beside him.

"Heard the news, have 'e?" asked Farmer Steve, as his fat calves creaked against the saddle-flaps within a few inches of Jemmy's, and their horses kept step, like a dealer's pair. "But there—come to think of it, I be a fool for asking, and you always along of Passon so!"

"Only came home yesterday. Haven't seen him yet," the Doctor answered briskly. "Haven't heard anything particular. Nothing the matter with him, I hope?"

"Not him, sir, so much as what he've taken up. Hath made up his mind, so people say, to abolish our old Fair to Perlycross." Farmer Steve watched the Doctor's face. He held his own opinion, but he liked to know the other's first. Moreover he owed him a little bill.

"But surely he cannot do that;" said Fox, who cared not a jot about the Fair, but thought of his own concern with it. "Why, it was granted by charter, I believe, hundreds of years ago; when Perlycross was a much larger place, and the main road to London passed through it, as the pack-saddle teams do still sometimes."

"So it were, sir, so it were. Many's the

time when I were a boy, I have read of Magner Charter, and the time as they starved the King in the island, afore the old yew-tree come on our old tower. But my brother John, he reckoneth as he knoweth everything; and he saith our market-place belongeth to the Dean and Chapter, and Fair was granted to Church, he saith, and so Church can abolish it. But I can't see no sense in that. Why, it be outside of Church railings altogether. Now you are a learned man, Doctor Fox. And if you'll give me your opinion, I can promise 'e, it shan't go no further."

"The plain truth is," replied Jemmy, knowing well that if his opinion went against the Parson, it would be all over the parish by supper-time, "I have never gone into the subject, and I know nothing whatever about it. But we all know the Fair has come down to nothing now. There has not been a beast there for the last three years, and nothing but a score of pigs, and one pen of sheep last year. It has come to be nothing but a pleasure-fair, with a little show of wrestling, and some singlestick play, followed by a big bout of drinking. Still I should have thought there would be at least a twelvemonth's notice, and a public proclamation."

“So say I, sir; and the very same words I used to my brother John, last night. John Horner is getting a'most too big, with his Churchwarden, and his hundred pounds, he had better a' kept for his family. Let 'un find out who have robbed his own Churchyard, afore a' singeth out again' a poor man's glass of ale. I don't hold with John in all things; though a' hath key pianner for 's dafters, and addeth field to field, same as rich man in the Bible laid up treasure for his soul this night. I tell you what, Doctor, and you may tell John Horner—I likes old things, for being old; though there may be more bad than good in them. What harm, if a few chaps do get drunk, and the quarrelsome folks has their heads cracked? They'd only go and do it somewhere else, if they was stopped of our place. Passon be a good man as ever lived, and wonnerful kind to the poor folk. But a' beginneth to have his way too much; and all along of my brother John. To tell you the truth, Doctor, I couldn't bear the job about that old tombstone, to memory of Squire Jan Toms, and a fine piece of poetry it were too. Leap-frogged it, hundreds and hundreds of times, when I were a boy, I have; and so has my father and grandfather afore me; and why

not my sons, and my grandsons too, when perhaps my own standeth 'longside of 'un? I won't believe a word of it, but what thic old ancient stone were smashed up a' purpose, by order of Passon Penniloe. Tell 'e what, Doctor, thic there channging of every mortal thing, just for the sake of channging, bain't the right way for to fetch folks to church; 'cordin' at least to my mind. Why do us go to church? Why, because can't help it; 'long of wives and children, when they comes, and lookin' out for 'un, when the children was ourselves. Turn the bottom up, sir, and what be that but custom, same as one generation requirèth from another? And to put new patches on it, and be proud of them, is the same thing as tinker did to wife's ham-boiler—drawed the rivets out, and made 'un leak worse than ever. Not another shilling will they patchers get from me."

Farmer Steve sat down in his saddle, and his red waistcoat settled down upon the pommel. His sturdy cob also laid down his ears, and stubborn British sentiment was in every line of both of them.

"Well, I won't pretend to say about the other matters;" said Fox, who as an Englishman could allow for obstinacy. "But, Farmer,

I am sure that you are wrong about the tombstone. Parson did not like it, and no wonder. But he is not the man to do things crookedly. He would have moved it openly, or not at all. It was quite as much an accident, as if your horse put his foot upon a nut and cracked it."

"Well, sir, well, sir, we has our own opinions. Oh, you have paid the pike for me! Thank 'e, Doctor. I'll pay yours, next time we come this way together."

The story of the tombstone was simply this. John Toms, a rollicking Cavalier of ancient Devonshire lineage, had lived and died at Perlycross, nearly two centuries ago. His grave was towards the great southern porch, and there stood his headstone large and bold, confronting the faithful at a corner where two causeways met. Thus every worshipper, who entered the House of Prayer by its main approach, was invited to reflect upon the fine qualities of this gentleman, as recorded in large letters. To a devout mind this might do no harm; but all Perlycross was not devout, and many a light thought was suggested, or perhaps an untimely smile produced, by this too sprightly memorial. "A spirited epitaph that, sir," was the frequent remark of visitors. "But

scarcely conceived in a proper spirit," was the Parson's general reply.

The hideous western gallery, the parish revel called the Fair, and this unseemly tombstone, had been sore tribulations to the placid mind of Penniloe; and yet he durst not touch that stone, sacred not to memory only, but to vested rights, and living vein of local sentiment. However the fates were merciful.

"Very sad accident this morning, sir. I do hope you will try to forgive us, Mr. Penniloe," said Robson Adney, the manager of the works, one fine October morning, and he said it with a stealthy wink; "seven of our chaps have let our biggest scaffold-pole, that red one, with a butt as big as a milestone, roll off their clumsy shoulders, and it has smashed poor Squire Toms' old tombstone into a thousand pieces. Never read a word of it again, sir—such a sad loss to the churchyard! But quite an accident, sir, you know; purely a casual accident."

The Curate looked at him, but he "smiled none"—as another tombstone still expresses it; and if charity compelled Mr. Penniloe to believe him, gratitude enforced another view; for Adney well knew his dislike of that stone, and was always so eager to please him.

But that every one who so desires may judge

for himself, whether Farmer Steve was right, or Parson Penniloe, here are the well-remembered lines that formed the preface to Divine worship in the parish of Perlycross.

“ ‘Halloa! who lieth here?’

‘I, old Squire Jan Toms.’

‘What dost lack?’ ‘A tun of beer,
For a tippie with them fantoms.’ ”

CHAPTER III.

THE SCHOOLMASTER ABROAD.

“Boys, here’s a noise!”

Sergeant Jakes strode up and down the long schoolroom on Friday morning, flapping his empty sleeve, and swinging that big cane with the tuberous joints, whose taste was none too saccharine. That well-known ejaculation, so expressive of stern astonishment, had for the moment its due effect. Curly heads were jerked back, elbows squared, sniggers were hushed, the munch of apples (which had been as of milching kine) stuck fast, or was shunted into bulging cheek; never a boy seemed capable of dreaming that there was any other boy in the world besides himself. Scratch of pens, and grunts of mental labour, were the only sounds in this culmination of literature, known as “Copy-exercise.” As Achilles, though reduced to a ghost, took a longer stride at the prowess of his son; and as deep joys, on a similar

occasion, pervaded Latona's silent breast; even so High-Jarks sucked the top of his cane, and felt that he had not lived in vain. There are many men still hearty—though it is so long ago—who have led a finer life, through that man's higher culture.

But presently—such is the nature of human nature, in its crude probation—the effect of that noble remonstrance waned. Silence (which is itself a shadow, cast by death upon life perhaps) began to flicker—as all dulness should—with the play of small ideas moving it. Little timid whispers, a cane's length below the breath, and with the heart shuffling out of all participation; and then a tacit grin that was afraid to move the molars, and then a cock of eye, that was intended to involve (when a bigger eye was turned away) its mighty owner; and then a clink of marbles in a pocket down the leg; and then a downright joke, of such very subtle humour, that it stole along the bench through funnel'd hands; and then alas, a small boy of suicidal levity sputtered out a laugh, which made wiser wigs stand up!

His crime was only deepened by ending in sham cough; and sad to say, the very boy who had made the fatal joke (instead of being

grateful for reckless approbation) stood up and pointed an unmanly finger at him. The Sergeant's keen eye was upon them both; and a tremble ran along the oak, that bore many tempting aptitudes for the vindication of ethics. But the Sergeant bode his time. His sense of justice was chivalrous. Let the big boy make another joke.

“Boys, here's a noise, again!”

Those who have not had the privilege of the Sergeant's lofty discipline can never understand—far less convey—the significance of his second shout. It expressed profound amazement, horror at our fallen state, incredulity of his own ears, promptitude to redress the wrong, and yet a pathetic sorrow at the impending grim necessity. The boys knew well that his second protest never ascended to heaven in vain; and the owners of tender quarters shrank, and made ready to slide beneath the protection of their bench. Other boys, with thick corduroys, quailed for the moment, and closed their mouths; but what mouth was ever closed permanently, by the opening of another?

“Now you shall have it, boys,” the Sergeant thundered, as the uproar waxed beyond power of words. “Any boy slipping out of stroke shall have double cuts for cowardice. Stop

the ends up. All along both rows of benches; I am coming, I am coming!"

"Oh sir, please sir, 'twadn' me, sir! 'Twor all along o' Bill Cornish, sir."

He had got this trimmer by the collar, and his cane swung high in air, when the door was opened vigorously, and a brilliant form appeared. Brilliant, less by its own merits, than by brave embellishment, as behoves a youth ascending stairs of state from page to footman, and mounting upward, ever upward, to the vinous heights of Butlerhood. For this was Bob Cornish, Bill's elder brother; and he smiled at the terrors of the hurtling cane, compulsive but a year ago, of tears.

With a dignity already imbibed from Binstock, this young man took off his hat, and employing a spare slate as a tray, presented a letter with a graceful bow. He was none too soon, but just in time. The weapon of outraged law came down, too lightly to dust a jacket; and the smiter, wonder-smitten, went to a desk, and read as follows.

"Lady Waldron will be much obliged if Sergeant Jakes will come immediately in the vehicle sent with the bearer of this letter. Let no engagement forbid this. Mr. Penniloe has kindly consented to it."

The roof resounded with shouts of joy, instead of heavy wailing, as the Sergeant at once dismissed the school; and in half an hour he entered the business-room at Walderscourt, and there found the lady of the house, looking very resolute, and accompanied by her daughter.

“Soldier Jakes will take a chair. See that the door is closed, my child, and no persons lingering near it. Now Inez, will you say to this brave soldier of your father’s regiment, what we desire him to undertake, if he will be so faithful; for the benefit of his Colonel’s family; also for the credit of this English country.”

This was clever of my lady. She knew that the veteran’s liking was not particularly active for herself, or any of the Spanish nation; but that he had transferred his love and fealty of so many years, to his Officer’s gentle daughter. Any request from Nicie would be almost as sacred a command to him, as if it had come from her father. He stood up, made a low bow followed by a military salute, and gazed at the sweet face he loved so well.

“It is for my dear father’s sake; and I am as sure as he himself would be,” Miss Waldron spoke with tears in her eyes, and a sad smile on her lips that would have moved a heart

much harder than this veteran's, "that you will not refuse to do us a great, a very great service, if you can. And we have nobody we can trust like you; because you are so true, and brave."

The Sergeant rose again, and made another bow even deeper than the former one; but instead of touching his grizzled locks he laid his one hand on his heart; and although by no means a gushing man, he found it impossible to prevent a little gleam, like the upshot of a well, quivering under his ferny brows.

"We would not ask you even so," continued Nicie, with a grateful glance, "if it were not that you know the place, and perhaps may find some people there still living to remember you. When my father lay wounded at the house of my grandfather, and was in great danger of his life, you, being also disabled for a time, were allowed at his request to remain with him, and help him. Will you go to that place again, to do us a service no one else can do?"

"To the end of the world, Miss, without asking why. But the Lord have mercy on all them boys! Whatever will they do without me?"

"We will arrange about all that, with Mr. Penniloe's consent. If that can be managed,

will you go, at once, and at any inconvenience to yourself?"

"No ill-convenience shall stop me, Miss. If I thought of that twice, I should be a deserter, afore the lines of the enemy. To be of the least bit of use to you, is an honour as well as a duty to me."

"I thought that you would; I was sure that you would." Inez gave a glance of triumph at her less trustful mother. "And what makes us hurry you so, is the chance that has suddenly offered for your passage. We heard this morning, by an accident almost, that a ship is to sail from Topsham to-morrow, bound direct for Cadiz. Not a large ship, but a fast-sailing vessel—a schooner I think they call it, and the Captain is one of Binstock's brothers. You would get there in half the time it would take to go to London, and wait about for passage, and then come all down the Channel. And from Cadiz you can easily get on. You know a little Spanish, don't you?"

"Not reg'lar, Miss. But it will come back again. I picked up just enough for this—I couldn't understand them much; but I could make them look as if they understood me."

"That is quite sufficient. You will have letters to three or four persons who are settled

there, old servants of my grandfather. We cannot tell which of them may be alive, but may well hope that some of them are so. The old house is gone, I must tell you that. After all the troubles of the war, there was not enough left to keep it up with."

"That grand old house, Miss, with the pillars, and the carrots, and the arches, the same as in a picture! And everybody welcome; and you never knew if there was fifty, or a hundred in it——"

"Sergeant, you describe it well;" Lady Waldron interrupted. "There are no such mansions in this country. Alas, it is gone from us for ever, because we loved our native land too well!"

"Not only that," said the truthful Inez; "but also because the young Count, as you would call him, has wasted the relics of his patrimony. And now I will explain to you the reasons for our asking this great service of you."

The veteran listened with close attention, and no small astonishment, to the young lady's clear account of that great public lottery, and the gorgeous prize accruing on the death of Sir Thomas Waldron. This was enough to tempt a ruined man to desperate measures; and Jakes had some knowledge in early days

of the young Count's headstrong character. But if it should prove so, if he were guilty of the crime which had caused so much distress and such prolonged unhappiness, yet his sister could not bear that the sordid motive should be disclosed, at least in this part of the world. For the sake of others, it would be needful to denounce the culprit; but if the detection were managed well, no motive need be assigned at all. Let every one form his own conclusion. Spanish papers, and Spanish news, came very sparsely to Devonshire; and the English public would be sure (in ignorance of that financial scheme, whose result supplied the temptation) to ascribe the assault upon Protestant rites to Popish contempt and bigotry.

"I should tell the whole, if I had to decide it;" said Nicie with the candour and simplicity of youth. "If he has done it, for the sake of nasty money, let everybody know what he has done it for."

But the Sergeant shook his head, and quite agreed with Lady Waldron. The world was quite quick enough at bad constructions, without receiving them ready-made.

"Leave busy-bodies to do their own buzzing;" was his oracular suggestion. "'Tis a grand old family, even on your mother's side, Miss."

Nicie smiled a little, as her mother stared at this new comparative estimate. "And what odds to our clodhoppers what they do? A Don don't look at things the same as a dung-carter; and it takes a man who knows the world to make allowance for him. The Count may have done it, mind. I won't say no, until such time as I can prove it. But after all, 'tis comforting to think that it was so, compared to what we all was afraid of. Why, the dear old Colonel would be as happy as a King, in the place he was so nigh going to after the battle of Barosa: looking down over the winding of the river, and the moon among the orange-trees, where he was a'making love!"

"Hush!" whispered Nicie, as her mother turned away, with a trembling in her throat; and the old man saw that the memory of the brighter days had brought the shadows also.

"Saturday to-morrow. Boys will do very well, till Monday;" he came out with this abruptly, to cover his confusion. "By that time, please God, I shall be in the Bay of Biscay. This is what I'll do, Miss, if it suits you and my lady. I'll come again to-night at nine o'clock, with my kit slung tidy, and not a word to anybody. Then I can have the

letters, Miss, and my last orders. Ship sails at noon to-morrow, name of *Montilla*. Mail-coach to Exeter passes White Post, a little after half-past ten to-night. Be aboard easily, afore daylight. No, Miss, thank you, I shan't want no money. Passage paid to and fro. Old soldier always hath a shot in the locker."

"As if we should let you go, like that! You shall not go at all, unless you take this purse."

That evening he received his last instructions, and the next day he sailed in the schooner *Montilla*.

Even after the many strange events, which had by this time caused such a whirl of giddiness in Perlycross, that if there had been a good crack across the street, every man and woman would have fallen headlong into it; and even before there had been leisure for people to try to tell them anyhow, to one another—much less discuss them at all as they deserved—this sudden break-up of the school, and disappearance of High Jarks, would have been absolutely beyond belief, if there had not been scores of boys, too loudly in evidence everywhere. But when a chap, about four feet high, came scudding in at any door that was open, and kicking at it if it dared to be

shut, and then went trying every cupboard-lock, and making sad eyes at his mother if the key was out; and then again, when he was stuffed to his buttons—which he would be, as sure as eggs are eggs—if the street went howling with his playful ways, and every corner was in a jerk with him, and no elderly lady could go along without her umbrella in front of her—how was it possible for any mother not to feel herself guilty of more harm than good?

In a word, “High Jarks” was justified (as all wisdom is) of his children; and the weak-minded women, who had complained that he smote too hard, were the first to find fault with the feeble measures of his substitute, Vickary Toogood of Honiton. This gentleman came into office on Monday, smiling in a very superior manner at his predecessor’s arrangements.

“I think we may lock up that,” he said, pointing to the Sergeant’s little tickler; “we must be unworthy of our vocation, if we cannot dispense with such primitive tools.” A burst of applause thrilled every bench; but knowing the boys of his parish so well, Mr. Penniloe shook his head with dubious delight.

And truly before the week was out, many

a time would he murmur sadly—"Oh for one hour of the Sergeant!" as he heard the Babel of tongues outside, and entering saw the sprawling elbows, slouching shoulders, and hands in pockets, which the "Apostle of Moral force"—*Moral farce* was its sound and meaning here—permitted as the attitude of pupillage.

"Sim'th I be quite out in my reckoning;" old Channing the Clerk had the cheek to say, as he met the Parson outside the school-door; "didn't know it were Whit-Monday yet."

Mr. Penniloe smiled, but without rejoicing; he understood the reference too well. Upon Whit-Monday the two rival Benefit-clubs of the village held their feast, and did their very utmost from bridge to Abbey, to out-drum, out-fife, and out-trumpet one another. Neither in his house was his conscience left untouched.

"I think Lady Waldron might have sent us a better man than that is;" Mrs. Muggridge observed one afternoon, when the uproar came across the road, and pierced the rectory windows. "I am not sure but what little Master Mike could keep better order than that is. Why, the beating of the bounds was nothing to it. What could you be about, sir, to take such a man as that?" Thyatira had long established full privilege of censure.

“Certainly there is a noise;” the Curate was always candid. “But he brought the very highest credentials from the Institute. We have scarcely given him fair trial yet. The system is new, you see, Mrs. Muggridge; and it must be allowed some time to take effect. No physical force, the moral sense appealed to, the higher qualities educed by kindness, the innate preference of right promoted and strengthened by self-exertion, the juvenile faculties to be elevated, from the moment of earliest development, by a perception of their high responsibility, and, and—well I really forget the rest, but you perceive that it amounts to——”

“Row, and riot, and roaring rubbish. That’s what it amounts to, sir. But I beg your pardon, sir; excuse my boldness, for speaking out, upon things so far above me. But when they comes across the road, at ten o’clock in the morning, to beg for a lump of raw beefsteak, by reason of two boys getting four black eyes, in fighting across the Master’s desk, the new system seem not Apostolical. An Apostle, about as much as I am! My father was above me, and had gifts, and he put himself back, when not understood, to the rising generation; but he never would demean

himself, to send for raw beefsteak for their black eyes."

"And I think he would have shown his common sense in that. What did you do, my good Thyatira?" Mr. Penniloe had a little spice of mischief in him, which always accompanies a sub-sense of humour.

"This was what I did, sir. I looked at him, and he seemed to have been in the wars himself, and to have come across, perhaps to get out of them, being one of the clever ones, as true Schoolmaster sayeth, and by the same token not so thick of head; and he looked up at me, as if he was proud of it, to take me in; while the real fighting boys look down, as I know by my brother who was guilty of it; and I said to him, very quiet like—'No steak kept here for moral-force black-eyes-boys. You go to Robert Jakes, the brother of a man that understands his business, and tell him to enter in his books, half a pound prime-cut, for four black eyes, to the credit of Vickary Toogood.'"

It was not only thus, but in many other ways, that the village at large shed painful tears (sadly warranted by the ears), and the Church looked with scorn at the children straggling in, like a lot of Dissenters going anyhow; and the Cross at the meeting of the

four main roads, which had been a fine stump for centuries, lost its proper coat of whitewash on Candlemas-day ; and the crystal Perle itself began to be threaded with red from pugnacious noses. For the lesson of all history was repeated, that softness universal, and unlimited concession, set off very grandly, but come home with broken heads, to load their guns with grapnel.

And what could Mr. Penniloe do, when some of the worst belligerents were those of his own household ; upon one frontier his three pupils, and upon another, Zip Tremlett ? Pike, Peckover, and Mopuss, the pupils now come back again, were all very decent and law-abiding fellows, but had drifted into a savage feud with the factory-boys at the bottom of the village. As they were but three against three score, it soon became unsafe for them to cross Perle-bridge, without securing their line of retreat. Of course they looked down from a lofty height upon "cads who smelled of yarn, and even worse ;" but what could moral, or even lineal excellence, avail them against the huge disparity of numbers ? Each of them held himself a match for any three of the enemy, and they issued a challenge upon that scale ; but the paper-cap'd host showed no

chivalry. On one occasion, this noble trio held the bridge victoriously against the whole force of the enemy, inflicting serious loss, and even preparing for a charge upon the mass. But the cowardly mass found a heap of road-metal, and in lack of their own filled the air with it, and the Pennilovian heroes had begun to bite the dust, when luckily Farmer John rode up, and saved the little force from annihilation, by slashing right and left through the Operative phalanx.

When Mr. Penniloe heard of this pitched battle, he was deeply grieved; and sending for his pupils administered a severe rebuke to them. But John Pike's reply was a puzzler to him.

"If you please, sir, will you tell us what to do, when they fall upon us?"

"Endeavour to avoid them;" replied the Clergyman, feeling some want of confidence however in his counsel.

"So we do, sir, all we can;" Pike made answer, with the aspect of a dove. "But they won't be avoided, when they think they've got enough cads together to lick us."

"I should like to know one thing," enquired the Hopper, striking out his calves, which were now becoming of commanding size; "are

we to be called 'Latin tay-kettles,' and 'Parson's pups,' and then do nothing but run away?"

"My father says that the road is called the King's Highway;" said Mopuss, who was a fat boy, with great deliberation, "because all his subjects have a right to it, but no right to throw it at one another."

"I admit that a difficulty arises there;" replied Mr. Penniloe as gravely as he could, for Mopuss was always quoting his papa, a lawyer of some eminence. "But really, my lads, we must not have any more of this. There is fault upon both sides, beyond all doubt. I shall see the factory-manager to-morrow, and get him to warn his pugnacious band. I am very unwilling to confine you to these premises; but if I hear of any more pitched battles, I shall be compelled to do so, until peace has been proclaimed."

Here again was Jakes to seek; for the fear of him lay upon the factory boys, as heavily as upon his own school-children. And perhaps as sore a point as any was, that he should have been rapt away, without full reason rendered.

CHAPTER IV.

LOYALTY.

“I do not consider myself at all an inquisitive man,” Mr. Penniloe reflected, and here the truth was with him; “nevertheless it is hard upon me to be refused almost the right to speculate upon this question. They have told me that it is of the last importance, to secure this great disciplinarian—never appreciated while with us, but now deplored so deeply—for a special service in the south of Spain. What that special service is, I am not to know, until his return; possibly not even then. And Mr. Webber has no idea what the meaning of it is. But I know that it has much to do—all to do, I might even say—with that frightful outrage of last November—three months ago, alas, alas, and a sad disgrace upon this parish still! Marvellous are the visitations of the Lord. Practically speaking, we know but little more of that affair now, than on the day it was

discovered. If it were not for one thing, I should even be driven at last to Gowler's black conclusion; and my faith in the true love of a woman, and in the honesty of a proud brave woman would be shattered, and leave me miserable. But now it is evident that good and gentle Nicie is acting entirely with her mother; and to imagine that she would wrong her father is impossible. Perhaps I shall even get friend Gowler's hundred pounds. What a triumph that would be! To obtain a large sum for the service of God from an avowed—ah well, who am I to think harshly of him? But the money might even be blest to himself; which is the first thing to consider. It is my duty to accept it therefore, if I can only get it.

“And here again is Jemmy Fox, not behaving at all as he used to do. Concealing something from me—I am almost sure of it by his manner—and discussing it, I do believe, with Gronow—an intimacy that cannot be good for him. I wish I could perceive more clearly, in what points I have neglected my duty to the parish; for I seem to be losing hold upon it, which must be entirely my own fault. There must be some want of judgment somewhere—what else could lead to such very sad fighting? Even Zip, a little girl, disgracing us by fighting

in the streets! That at any rate I can stop, and will do so pretty speedily."

This was a lucky thought for him, because it led to action, instead of brooding, into which miserable condition he might otherwise have dropped. And when a man too keen of conscience hauls himself across the coals, the Governor of a hot place takes advantage to peep up between them. Mr. Penniloe rang the bell, and begged Mrs. Muggridge to be good enough to send Miss Zippy to him.

Zip, who had grown at least two inches since the death of her grandmother—not in length perhaps so much as in the height she made of it—came shyly into the dusky book-room, with one of her long hands crumpling the lower corner of her pinafore into her great brown eyes. She knew she was going to catch it, and knew also the way to meet it, for she opened the conversation with a long-drawn sob.

"Don't be frightened, my dear child;" said the Parson with the worst of his intention waning. "I am not going to scold you much, my dear."

"Oh, I was so terrible afraid, you was." The little girl crept up close to him, and began to play with his button-hole, curving her

lissome fingers in and out, like rosebuds in a trellis, and looking down at the teardrops on her pinny. "Plaise sir, I knows well enough, as I desarnes a bit of it."

"Then why did you do it, my dear child? But I am glad that you feel it to be wrong."

The clergyman was sitting in the deep square chair, where most of his sermons came to him, and he brought his calm face down a little, to catch the expression of the young thing's eyes. Suddenly she threw herself into his arms, and kissed his lips, and cheeks, and forehead, and stroked his silvery hair, and burst into a passionate wail; and then slid down upon a footstool, and nursed his foot.

"Do 'e know why I done that?" she whispered, looking up over his knees at him. "Because there be nobody like 'e, in the heavens, or the earth, or the waters under the earth. Her may be as jealous as ever her plaiseth; but I tell 'e, I don't care a cuss."

"My dear little impetuous creature," Mr. Penniloe knew that his darling Fay was the one defied thus recklessly; "I am sure that you are fond of all of us. And to please me, as well as for much higher reasons, you must never use bad words. Bad deeds too I have heard of, Zip, though I am not going to scold

much now. But why did you get into conflict with a boy?"

Zip pondered the meaning of these words for a moment, and then her conscience interpreted.

"Because he spoke bad of 'e, about the Fair." She crooked her quick fingers together as she spoke, and tore them asunder with vehemence.

"And what did you do to him? Eh Zip? Oh Zip!"

"Nort, for to sarve 'un out, as a' desarved. Only pulled most of 's hair out. His moother hurned arter me; but I got inside the ge-at."

"A nice use indeed for my premises—to make them a refuge, after committing assault and battery! Well, what shall we come to next?"

"Plaise sir, I want to tell 'e zummut;" said the child, looking up very earnestly. "Bain't it Perlycrass Fair, come Tuesday next?"

"I am sorry to say that it is. A day of sad noise and uproar. Remember that little Zip must not go outside the gates, that day."

"Nor Passon nayther;" the child took hold of his hand, as if she were pulling him inside the gate, for her nature was full of gestures; and then she gazed at him with a sage smile of triumph—"and Passon mustn't go nayther."

Mr. Penniloe took little heed of this (though

he had to think of it afterwards) but sent the child to have her tea, with Muggridge and the children.

But before he could set to his work in earnest, although he had discovered much to do, in came his own child, little Fay, looking round the room indignantly. With her lady-like style, she was much too grand to admit a suspicion of jealousy, but she smoothed her golden hair gently back, and just condescended to glance round the chairs. Mr. Penniloe said nothing, and feigned to see nothing, though getting a little afraid in his heart; for he always looked on Fay as representing her dear mother. He knew that the true way to learn a child's sentiments, is to let them come out of their own accord. There is nothing more jealous than a child, except a dog.

"Oh, I thought Darkie was here again!" said Fay, throwing back her shoulders, and spinning on one leg. "This room belongs to Darkie now altogether. Though I can't see what right she has to it."

Mr. Penniloe treated this soliloquy, as if he had not heard it; and went on with his work, as if he had no time to attend to children's affairs just now.

"It may be right, or it may be wrong," said

Fay, addressing the room in general, and using a phrase she had caught up from Pike, a very great favourite of hers; "but I can't see why all the people of this house should have to make way for a Gipsy."

This was a little too much for a father and clergyman to put up with. "Fay!" said Mr. Penniloe in a voice that made her tremble; and she came and stood before him, contrite and sobbing, with her head down, and both hands behind her back. Without raising her eyes the fair child listened, while her father spoke impressively; and then with a reckless look, she tendered full confession.

"Father, I know that I am very wicked, and I seem to get worse every day. I wish I was the Devil altogether; because then I could not get any worse."

"My little child," said her father with amazement; "I can scarcely believe my ears. My gentle little Fay to use such words!"

"Oh, *she* thinks nothing of saying that! And you know how fond you are of her, papa. I thought it might make you fond of me."

"This must be seen to at once," thought Mr. Penniloe, when he had sent his jealous little pet away; "but what can I do with that poor deserted child? Passionate, loving, very

strong-willed, grateful, fearless, sensitive, inclined to be contemptuous, wonderfully quick at learning, she has all the elements of a very noble woman—or of a very pitiable wreck. Quite unfit to be with my children, as my better judgment pronounced at first. She ought to be under a religious, large-minded, firm, but gentle woman—a lady too, or she would laugh at her. Though she speaks broad Devonshire dialect herself, she detects in a moment the mistakes of others, and she has a lofty contempt for vulgarity. She is thrown by the will of God upon my hands, and I should be a coward, or a heartless wretch, if I shirked the responsibility. It will almost break her heart to go from me; but go she must for her own sake, as well as that of my little ones.”

“How are you, sir?” cried a cheerful voice. “I fear that I interrupt you. But I knocked three or four times, and got no answer. Excuse my coming in like this. Can I have a little talk with you?”

“Certainly, Dr. Fox. I beg your pardon; but my mind was running upon difficult questions. Let us have the candles, and then I am at your service.”

“Now,” said Jemmy when they were alone

again; "I dare say you think that I have behaved very badly, in keeping out of your way so long."

"Not badly, but strangely;" replied the Parson, who never departed from the truth, even for the sake of politeness. "I concluded that there must be some reason; knowing that I had done nothing to cause it."

"I should rather think not. Nothing ever changes you. But it was for your sake. And now I will enlighten you, as the time is so close at hand. It appears that you have not succeeded in abolishing the Fair."

"Not for this year. There were various formalities. But this will be the last of those revels, I believe. The proclamation will be read on Tuesday morning. After this year, I hope, no more carousals prolonged far into the Penitential day. It will take them by surprise; but it is better so. Otherwise there would have been preparations for a revel more reckless, as being the last."

"I suppose you know, sir, what bitter offence you are giving to hundreds of people all around?"

"I am sorry that it should be so. But it is my simple duty."

"Nothing ever stops you from your duty."

But I hope you will do your duty to yourself and us, by remaining upon your own premises that day."

"Certainly not. If I did such a thing, I should seem to be frightened of my own act. Please God, I shall be in the market-place, to hear the proclamation read, and attend to my parish-work afterwards."

"I know that it is useless to argue with you, sir. None of our people would dare to insult you; but one cannot be sure of outsiders. At any rate, do keep near the village, where there are plenty to defend you."

"No one will touch me. I am not a hero; and I can't afford to get my new hat damaged. I shall remain among the civilized, unless I am called away."

"Well, that is something; though not all that I could wish. And now I will tell you why I am glad, much as I dislike the Fair, that for this year at least it is to be. It is a most important date to me, and I hope it will bring you some satisfaction also. Unless we manage very badly indeed, or have desperately bad luck, we shall get hold of the villains who profaned your churchyard, and through them of course find the instigator."

With this preface, Fox told his tale to Mr.

Penniloe, and quite satisfied him about the reasons for concealing it so long, as well as made him see that it would not do to preach upon the subject yet.

“My dear young friend, no levity, if you please;” said the Parson, though himself a little, a very little, prone to it on the sly, among people too solid to stumble. “I draw my lessons from the past, or present. Better men than myself insist upon the terrors of the future, and scare people from looking forward. But our Church, according to my views, is a cheerful and progressive mother, encouraging her children, and fortifying——”

“Quite so;” said Jemmy Fox, anticipating too much on that head; “but she would not fortify us with such a Lenten *fare* as this. Little pun, sir, not so very bad. However, to business. I meant to have told you nothing of this till Monday or Tuesday, until it struck me that you would be hurt perhaps, if the notice were so very short. The great point is that not a word of our intentions should get abroad, or the rogues might make themselves more scarce than rogues unluckily are allowed to be. This is why we have put off our application to Mockham, until Tuesday morning; and even then we shall lay our information as

privately as possible. But we must have a powerful *posse*, when we proceed to arrest them; for one of the men, as I told you, is of tremendous bulk and stature, and the other not a weakling. And perhaps the third, the fellow they come to meet, will show fight on their behalf. We must allow no chance of escape, and possibly they may have fire-arms. We shall want at least four constables, as well as Gronow, and myself."

"But all good subjects of the King are bound to assist, if called upon in the name of His Majesty, at the execution of a warrant."

"So they are; but they never do it, even when there is no danger. In the present case, they would boldly run away. And more than that, by ten o'clock on Fair-night, how will His Majesty's true lieges be? Unable to keep their own legs, I fear. The trouble will be to keep our own force sober. But Gronow has undertaken to see to that. If he can do it, we shall be all right. We may fairly presume that the enemy also will not be too steady upon their pins. The only thing I don't like is that a man of Gronow's age should be in the scuffle. He has promised to keep in the background; but if things get lively, can I trust him?"

"I should think it very doubtful. He looks

an uncommonly resolute man. If there is a conflict, he will be in it. But do you think that the big man Harvey really is our Zippy's father? If so, I am puzzled by what his mother said; and I think the old lady was truthful. So far as I could understand what she said, her son had never been engaged in any of the shocking work we hear so much of now. And she would not have denied it from any sense of shame, for she confessed to even worse things, on the part of other sons."

"She may not have known it. He has so rarely been at home. A man of that size would have been notorious throughout the parish, if he had ever lived at home; whereas nobody knows him, not even Joe Crang, who knows every man and horse for miles around. But the Whetstone people are a tribe apart, and keep all their desolate region to themselves."

"The district is extra-parochial, a sort of No-man's land almost," Mr. Penniloe answered thoughtfully. "An entire parish intervenes between their hill and Hagdon; so that I cannot go among them, without seeming to intrude upon a neighbour's duties. Otherwise it is very sad to think that a colony almost of heathens should be permitted in the midst of

us. I hear that there is a new landowner now, coming from your father's part of the country, who claims seigniorial rights over them, which they intend to resist with all their might."

"To be sure. Sir Henry Haggerstone is the man, a great friend of mine, and possibly something nearer before long. He cares not a pin for the money; but he is not the man to forego his rights, especially when they are challenged. I take a great interest in those people. Sir Henry promised me an introduction, through his steward, or whoever it is; and but for this business I should have gone over. But as these two fellows have been among them, I thought it wiser to keep away. I intend to know more of them, when this is over. I rather like fellows who refuse to pay."

"You have plenty of experience of them, Doctor, without going over to the Whetstone. Would that we had a few gratuitous Church-builders, as well as a gratuitous doctor in this parish! But I sadly fear that your services will be too much in demand after this arrest. You should have at least six constables, if our people will not help you. Supposing that the Whetstone men are there, would they not attempt a rescue?"

"No sir; they will not be there; it is not

their custom. I am ashamed, as it is, to take four men against two, and would not, except for the great importance of it. But I am keeping you too long. I shall make a point of beholding you no more, until Wednesday morning; except of course in church on Sunday. You must be kept out of it altogether. It is not for me to tell you what to do; but I trust that you will not add to our anxieties, by appearing at all in the matter. Your busiest time of the year is at hand; and I scarcely know whether I have done right, in worrying you at all about this affair."

"Truly the time is appointed now for conflict with the unseen powers, rather than those of our own race. But why are we told to gird our loins—of which succincture the Spencer is expressive, and therefore curtly clerical—unless we are also to withstand evil-doers, even in the market-place? Peace is a thing that we all desire; but no man must be selfish of it. If every man stuck to his own corner only, would there ever be a dining-table? Be not surprised then, Master Jemmy Fox, if I should appear upon the warlike scene. As the Statesmen of the age say—when they don't know what to say—I reserve my right of action."

Fox was compelled to be satisfied with this,

because he could get no better. Yet he found it hard to be comfortable about the now urgent outlook. Beyond any doubt, he must go through with the matter in hand, and fight it well out. But where would he be, if the battle left him, with two noble heroes disabled, and both of them beyond the heroic time of life? As concerned himself, he was quite up for the fight, and regarded the prospect with pleasure, as behoves a young man, who requires a little change, and has a lady-love who will rejoice in his feats. Moreover he knew that he was very quick of foot, and full of nimble dodges; but these elderly men could not so skip away, even if their dignity allowed it. After much grim meditation, when he left the rectory, he made up his mind to go straight to Squire Mockham; and although it was a doubtful play of cards, to consult thus informally the Justice, before whom the information was soon to be laid, it seemed to him, on the whole, to be the proper course. On Tuesday it would be too late to receive any advice upon the subject.

But Mr. Mockham made no bones of it. Whether he would grant the warrant or not, was quite another question, and must depend upon the formal depositions when received. The advice that he gave was contingent only

upon the issue of the warrant, as to which he could say nothing yet. But he did not hesitate, as the young man's friend, to counsel him about his own share in the matter.

"Keep all your friends out of it. Let none of them be there. The execution of a warrant is the duty of the Authorities, not of amateurs and volunteers. Even you yourself should not appear, unless it be just to identify; though afterwards you must do so, of course, when the charge comes to be heard. Better even that criminals should escape, than that non-official persons should take the business on themselves. As a magistrate's son, you must know this."

"That is all very well, in an ordinary case," said Fox, who had got a great deal more than he wanted. "But here it is of such extreme importance to get to the bottom of this matter; and if they escape, where are we?"

"All very true. But if you apply to the law, you must let the law do its own work, and in its own way, though it be not perfect. All you can do, is to hope for the best."

"And probably get the worst," said Jemmy, with a grin of resignation. "But I suppose I may be at hand, and ready to give assistance, if called upon?"

"Certainly," answered Mr. Mockham, rubbing his hands gently; "that is the privilege of every subject, though not claimed very greedily. By-the-by, I was told that there is to be some sort of wrestling at your Fair this year. Have you heard anything about it?"

"Well perhaps a little." The young man looked slyly at the Magistrate, for one of the first things he had heard was that Mockham had started the scheme by giving ten guineas towards the prize-fund. "Among other things I heard that Polwarth is coming, the Cornish champion as they call him."

"And he holds the West of England belt. It is too bad," said the Magistrate, "that we should have no man to redeem it. When I was a boy, we should all have been mad, if the belt had gone over the border long. But who is there now? The sport is decaying, and fisticuffs (far more degrading work) are ousting it altogether. I think you went to see the play last year."

"I just looked in at it, once or twice. It did not matter very much to me, as a son of Somerset; but it must have been very grievous to a true Devonian, to see Cornwall chucking his countrymen about, like a lot of wax-headed ninepins. And no doubt he will do the same

thing this year. You can't help it—can you, Squire?”

“Don't be too sure of that, my friend. A man we never heard of has challenged for the belt, on behalf of Devon. He will not play in the standards, but have best of three backs with the Cornishman, for the belt and a special prize raised by subscription. When I was a lad I used to love to see it, ay, and I knew all the leading men. Why, all the great people used to go to see it then. The Lord Lieutenant of the county would come down from Westminster for any great match; and as for Magistrates—well, the times are changed.”

“You need not have asked me the news, I see. To know all about it, I must come to you. I should have been glad to see something of it, if it is to be such a big affair. But that will be impossible on account of this job. Good night, sir. Twelve o'clock, I think you said, will suit for our application?”

“Yes, and to stop malicious mouths—for they get up an outcry, if one knows anybody—I shall get Sir Edwin Sanford to join me. He is in the Commission for Somerset too; and so we can arrange it—if issued at all, to hold good across the border.”

CHAPTER V.

A WRESTLING BOUT.

VALENTINE'S DAY was on Sunday that year, and a violent gale from the south and west set in before daylight, and lasted until the evening, without bringing any rain. Anxiety was felt about the Chancel roof, which had only been patched up temporarily, and waterproofed with thick tarpaulins; for the Exeter builders had ceased work entirely during that December frost, and as yet had not returned to it. To hurry them, while engaged elsewhere, would not have been just, or even wise, inasmuch as they might very fairly say, "let us have a little balancing of books first, if you please."

However the old roof withstood the gale, being sheltered from the worst of it, and no further sinking of the wall took place; but at the Abbey, some fifty yards eastward, a very sad thing came to pass. The south-western corner and the western end (the most conspicuous

part remaining) were stripped, as if by a giant's rip-hook, of all their dark mantle of ivy. Like a sail blown out of the bolt-ropes, away it all went bodily, leaving the white flint rough and rugged, and staring like a suburban villa of the most choice effrontery. The contrast with the remainder of the ruins, and the old stone church, was hideous; and Mr. Penniloe at once resolved to replace and secure afresh as much of the fallen drapery as had not been shattered beyond hope of life. Walter Haddon very kindly offered to supply the ladders, and pay half the cost; for the picturesque aspect of his house was ruined by this bald background. This job was to be put in hand on Thursday; but worse things happened before that day.

"Us be going to have a bad week of it," old Channing, the clerk, observed on Monday, as he watched the four vanes on the tower (for his eyes were almost as keen as ever) and the woodcock feathers on the western sky; "never knowed a dry gale yet, but were follered by a wet one twice as bad; leastways if a' coom from the Dartmoor mountains."

However, things seemed right enough on Tuesday morning, to people who seldom think much of the sky; and the rustics came trooping in to the Fair, as brave as need be, and with

all their Sunday finery. A prettier lot of country girls no Englishman might wish, and perhaps no other man might hope to see, than the laughing, giggling, blushing, wondering, simpering, fluttering, or bridling maidens, fresh from dairy, or churn, or linhay, but all in very bright array, with love-knots on their breasts, and lavender in their pocket-handkerchiefs. With no depressing elegance perhaps among them, and no poetic sighing for impossible ideals; and probably glancing backwards, more than forwards on the path of life, because the rule and the practice is, for the lads of the party to walk behind.

Louts are these, it must be acknowledged, if looked at from too high a point; and yet, in their way, not by any means so low, as a topper on the high horse, with astral spurs, and a banner of bad Latin, might condemn them for to be. If they are clumsy, and awkward, and sheepish, and can only say — “Thank’e, sir! Veyther is quite well,” in answer to “How are you to-day, John?” — some of it surely is by reason of a very noble quality, now rarer than the great auk’s egg; and known, while it was a noun still substantive, as modesty. But there they were, and plenty of them, in the year 1836; and

they meant to spend their money in good fairing, if so be their girls were kind.

Mr. Penniloe had a lot of good heart in him; and when he came out to stand by the bellman, and trumpeter who thrilled the market-place, his common sense, and knowledge of the darker side, had as much as they could do to back him up against the impression of the fair young faces, that fell into the dumps, at his sad decree. The strong evil-doers were not come yet, their time would not begin till the lights began to flare, and the dark corners hovered with temptation. Silence was enjoined three times by ding-dong of bell and blare of trump, and thrice the fatal document was read with stern solemnity and mute acceptance of every creature except ducks, whom nothing short of death can silence, and scarcely even that when once their long valves quiver with the elegiac strain.

The trumpeter from Exeter, with scarlet sash and tassel, looked down from an immeasurable height upon the village bellman, and a fiddler in the distance, and took it much amiss that he should be compelled to time his sonorous blasts by the tinkle tinkle of old nunks.

"Truly I am sorry," said the Curate to himself, while lads and lasses, decked with

primrose and the first white violets, whispered sadly to one another—"no more fairing after this"—"I am sorry that it should be needful to stop all these innocent enjoyments."

"Then why did you send for me, sir?" asked the trumpeter rather savagely, as one who had begged at the rectory for beer, to medicate his lips against the twang of brass, but won not a drop from Mrs. Muggridge.

Suddenly there came a little volley of sharp drops—not of the liquid he desired—dashed into the trumpeter's red face, and against the back of the Parson's hat—the first skit of rain, that seemed rather to rise, as if from a blow-pipe, than fall from the clouds. Mr. Penniloe hastened to his house close by, for the market-place was almost in a straight line with the school, and taking his old gingham umbrella, set off alone for a hamlet called Southend, not more than half a mile from the village. Although not so learned in the weather as his clerk, he could see that the afternoon was likely to prove wet, and the longer he left it the worse it would be, according to all indications. Without any thought of adversaries, he left the village at a good brisk pace, to see an old parishioner of whose illness he had heard.

Crossing a meadow on his homeward course

he observed that the footpath was littered here and there with strips and patches of yellow osier peel, as if, since he had passed an hour or so ago, some idle fellow had been "whittling" wands from a withy-bed which was not far off. For a moment he wondered what this could mean; but not a suspicion crossed his mind of a rod in preparation for his own back.

Alas, too soon was this gentleman enlightened. The lonely footpath came sideways into a dark and still more lonesome lane, deeply sunk between tangled hedges, except where a mouldering cob wall stood, sole relic of a worn-out linhay. Mr. Penniloe jumped lightly from the treddled stile into the mucky and murky lane, congratulating himself upon shelter here, for a squally rain was setting in; but the leap was into a den of wolves.

From behind the cob wall, with a yell, out rushed four hulking fellows, long of arm and leg, still longer of the weapons in their hands. Each of them bore a white withy switch, flexible, tough, substantial, seemly instrument for a pious verger—but what would pious vergers be doing here, and why should their faces retire from view? Each of them had tied across his most expressive, and too distinctive part, a patch of white muslin, such as imparts

the sweet sense of modesty to a chamber-window; but modesty in these men was small.

Three of them barred the Parson's road, while the fourth cut off his communications in the rear; but even so did he not perceive the full atrocity of their intentions. To him they appeared to be inditing of some new form of poaching, or some country game of skill perhaps; or these might be rods of measurement.

"Allow me to pass, my friends," he said; "I shall not interfere with your proceedings. Be good enough to let me go by."

"Us has got a little bit o' zummat," said the biggest of them, with his legs astraddle, "to goo with 'e, Passon, and to 'baide with 'e a bit. A choice bit of fairing, zort o' peppermint stick, or stick lickerish."

"I am not a fighting man: but if any man strikes me, let him beware for himself. I am not to be stopped on a public highway, like this."

As Mr. Penniloe spoke, he unwisely closed his umbrella, and holding it as a staff of defence, advanced against the enemy.

One step was all the advance he made, for ere he could take another, he was collared, and tripped up, and cast forward heavily upon his forehead. There certainly was a great stone in the mud; but he never knew whether it was

that, or a blow from a stick, or even the ebony nob of his own umbrella, that struck him so violently as he fell; but the effect was that he lay upon his face, quite stunned, and in danger of being smothered in the muck.

“Up with’s coat-tails! Us’ll dust his jacket. Ring the bull on ’un—one, two, dree, vour.”

The four stood round, with this very fine Christian, ready—as the Christian faith directs, for weak members, not warmed up with it,—ready to take everything he could not help; and the four switches hummed in the air with delight, like the thirsty swords of Homer; when a rush as of many winds swept them back to innocence. A man of great stature, and with blazing eyes, spent no words upon them, but lifted up the biggest with a chuck below his chin, which sent him sprawling into the ditch, with a broken jaw, then took another by the scruff of his small clothes, and hefted him into a dog-rose stool, which happened to stand on the top of the hedge with shark’s teeth ready for their business; then he leaped over the prostrate Parson, but only smote vacant air that time. “The devil, the devil, ’tis the devil himself!” cried the two other fellows, cutting for their very lives.

“Reckon, I were not a breath too soon;”

said the man who had done it, as he lifted Mr. Penniloe, whose lips were bubbling and nose clotted up; "why, they would have killed 'e in another minute, my dear. D—d if I bain't afeared they has done it now."

That the clergyman should let an oath pass unrebuked, would have been proof enough to any one who knew him that it never reached his mind. His silver hair was clogged with mud, and his gentle face begrimed with it, and his head fell back between the big man's knees, and his blue eyes rolled about without seeing earth or heaven.

"That doiled Jemmy Fox, we wants 'un now. Never knowed a doctor come, when a' were wanted. Holloa, you be moving there, be you? You dare stir, you murderer!" It was one of the men lately pitched into the hedge; but he only groaned again, at that great voice.

"Do 'e veel a bit better now, my dear? I've a girt mind to kill they two hosebirds in the hedge; and what's more, I wull, if 'e don't came round pretty peart."

As if to prevent the manslaughter threatened, the Parson breathed heavily once or twice, and tried to put his hand to his temples; and then looked about with a placid amazement.

"You 'bide there, sir, for a second," said the

man, setting him carefully upon a dry bank with his head against an ash-tree. "Thy soul shall zee her desire of thine enemies, as I've a'read when I waz a little buy."

To verify this promise of Holy Writ, he took up the stoutest of the white switches, and visiting the ditch first, and then the hedge-trough, left not a single accessible part of either of those ruffians without a weal upon it as big as his thumb, and his thumb was not a little one. They howled like a couple of pigs at the blacksmith's, when he slips the ring into their noses red-hot; and it is lawful to hope that they felt their evil deeds.

"T'other two shall have the very same, bumbai; I knows where to put hands on 'em both;" said the operator, pointing towards the village; and it is as well to mention that he did it.

"Now, sir, you come along of I." He cast away the fourth rod, having elicited their virtues, and taking Mr. Penniloe in his arms, went steadily with him to the nearest house. This stood alone in the outskirts of the village; and there two very good old ladies lived, with a handsome green railing in front of them.

These, after wringing their hands for some minutes, enabled Mr. Penniloe to wash his face

and head, and gave him some red currant wine, and sent their child of all work for Mrs. Muggridge. Meanwhile the Parson began to take a more distinct view of the world again, his first emotion being anxiety about his Sunday beaver, which he had been wearing in honour of the Proclamation—the last duty it was ever destined to discharge. But the “gigantic individual,” as the good ladies called him, was nowhere to be seen, when they mustered courage to persuade one another to peep outside the rails.

By this time the weather was becoming very bad. Everybody knows how a great gale rises; not with any hurry, or assertion of itself, (as a little squall does, that is limited for time) but with a soft hypocritical sigh, and short puffs of dissimulation. The solid great storm, that gets up in the south, and means to make every tree in England bow, to shatter the spray on the Land's-end cliffs while it shakes all the towers of London, begins its advance without any broad rush, but with many little ticklings of the space it is to sweep. A trumpery frolic where four roads meet, a woman's umbrella turned inside out, a hat tossed into a horse-pond perhaps, a weather-cock befooled into chace of head with tail, and

a clutch of big raindrops sheafed into the sky and shattered into mist again—these, and a thousand other little pranks and pleasantries, are as the shrill admonitions of the fife, in the vanguard of the great invasion of the heavens.

But what cares a man, with his money in his pockets, how these larger things are done? And even if his money be yet to seek, still more shall it preponderate. A tourney of wrestlers for cash and great glory was crowding the courtyard of the *Ivy-bush* with every man who could raise a shilling. A steep roof of rick-cloth and weatherproof canvas, supported on a massive ridge-pole would have protected the enclosure from any ordinary storm; but now the tempestuous wind was tugging, whistling, panting, shrieking and with great might thundering, and the violent rain was pelting, like the rattle of pebbles on the Chessil beach, against the strained canvas of the roof; while the rough hoops of candles inside were swinging, with their crops of guttering tallow welted, like sucked stumps of Asparagus. Nevertheless the spectators below, mounted on bench, or stool, or trestle, or huddled against the rope-ring, were jostling, and stamping, and craning their necks, and digging elbows into one another, and yelling,

and swearing, and waving rotten hats, as if the only element the Lord ever made was mob.

Suddenly all jabber ceased, and only the howls of the storm were heard, and the patter from the sodden roof, as Polwarth of Bodmin, having taken formal back from Dascombe of Devon, (the winner of the Standards, a very fine player, but not big enough for him) skirred his flat hat into the middle of the sawdust, and stood there flapping his brawny arms, and tossing his big-rooted nose, like a bull. In the flare of the lights, his grin looked malignant, and the swing of his bulk overweening; and though he said nothing but "Cornwall for ever!" he said it as if it meant—"Devonshire be d—d!"

After looking at the company with mild contempt, he swaggered towards the umpires, and took off his belt, with the silver buckles and the red stones flashing, and hung it upon the cross-rail for defiance. A shiver and a tremble of silence ran through the hearts, and on the lips of three hundred sad spectators. Especially a gentleman who sate behind the umpires, dressed in dark riding-suit and a flapped hat, was swinging from side to side with strong feeling.

“Is there no man to try a fall for Devonshire? Won’t kill him to be beaten. Consolation money, fifty shillings.” The chairman of the Committee announced; but nobody came forward.

A deep groan was heard from old Channing the Clerk, who had known such very different days; while the Cornishman made his three rounds of the ring, before he should buckle on the belt again; and snorted each time, like Goliath. Gathering up the creases of his calves, which hung like the chins of an Alderman, he stuck his heels into the Devonshire earth, to ask what it was made of. Then, with a smile, which he felt to be kind, and heartily large to this part of the world, he stooped to pick up the hat gay with seven ribbons, wrung from Devonshire button-holes.

But behold, while his great hand was going to pick it up thus carelessly, another hat struck it, and whirled it away, as a quoit strikes a quoit that appears to have won.

“Devon for ever! And Cornwall to the Devil!” A mighty voice shouted, and a mighty man came in, shaking the rain and the wind from his hair. A roar of hurrahs overpowered the gale, as the man taking heed of nobody, strode up to the belt, and with a pat of his left

hand, said—"I wants this here little bit of ribbon."

"Thee must plai for 'un fust," cried the hero of Cornwall.

"What else be I come for?" the other enquired.

When formalities had been satisfied, and the proper clothing donned, and the champions stood forth in the ring, looking at one another, the roof might have dropped, without any man heeding, until it came across his eyes.

The challenger's name had been announced—"Harvey Tremlett, of Devonshire"—but only one or two besides old Channing had any idea who he was; and even old Channing was not aware that the man had been a wrestler from early youth, so seldom had he visited his native place.

"A' standeth like a man as understood it,"
"A' be bigger in the back than Carnishman,"
"Hope 'a hath trained, or 's wind won't hold;" sundry such comments of critical power showed that the public, as usual, knew ten times as much as the performers.

These, according to the manner of the time, were clad alike, but wore no pads, for the brutal practice of kicking was now forbidden at meetings of the better sort. A jacket, or

jerkin, of tough sail-cloth, half-sleeved and open in front afforded firm grasp, but no clutch for throttling; breeches of the stoutest cord, belted at waist and strapped at knee, red worsted stockings for Devonshire, and yellow on behalf of Cornwall, completed their array; except that the Cornishman wore ankle-boots, while the son of Devon, at his own request, was provided only with sailor's pumps. The advantage of these, for lightness of step and pliancy of sole, was obvious; but very few players would venture upon them, at the risk of a crushed and disabled foot. "Fear he bain't nim' enough for they pea-shells. They be all very well for a boy;" said Channing.

The Cornishman saw that he had found his match, perhaps even his master in bodily strength, if the lasting power could be trusted. Skill and endurance must decide the issue, and here he knew his own pre-eminence. He had three or four devices of his own invention, but of very doubtful fairness; if all other powers failed, he would have recourse to them.

For two or three circuits of the ring, their mighty frames and limbs kept time and poise with one another. Each with his left hand grasped the other by the shoulder lappet; each kept his right hand hovering like a hawk, and

the fingers in ply for a dash, a grip, a tug. Face to face, and eye to eye, intent upon every twinkle, step for step they marched sideways, as if to the stroke of a heavy bell, or the beating of slow music. Each had his weight thrown slightly forwards, and his shoulders slouched a little, watching for one unwary move, and testing by some subtle thrill the substance of the other, as a glass is flipped to try its ring.

By a feint of false step, and a trick of eye, Polwarth got an opening. In he dashed, the other's arm flew up, and the Cornish grip went round him. In vain he put forth his mighty strength, for there was no room to use it. Down he crashed, but turned in falling, so that the back was doubtful.

"Back"! "Fair back"! "No back at all." "Four pins." "Never, no, three pins." "See where his arm was?" "Foul, foul, foul!" Shouts of wrath; and even blows ensued; for a score or two of Cornishmen were there.

"Hush for the Umpires!" "Hold your noise." "Thee be a liar." "So be you." The wind and the rain were well out-roared, until the Umpires, after some little consultation gave award.

“We allow it true back, for Cornwall. Unless the fall claims foul below belt. If so, it will be for Referee.” Which showed that they differed upon that point.

“Let ’un have it. I won’t claim no foul. Let ’un do it again, if ’a can.” Thus spake the fallen man, striding up to the Umpires’ post. A roar of cheers rang round the tent, though many a Devonshire face looked glum, and a few groans clashed with the frank hurrahs.

The second bout was a brief one, but afforded much satisfaction to all lovers of fair play, and therefore perhaps to the Cornishmen. What Tremlett did was simply this. He feigned to be wholly absorbed in guarding against a repetition of the recent trick. The other expecting nothing more than tactics of defence was caught, quite unawares, by his own device, and down he went—a very candid four-pin fall.

Now came the final bout, the supreme decision of the tie, the crowning struggle for the palm. The issue was so doubtful, that the oldest and most sage of all palæstric oracles could but look,—and feared that voice might not prove—wise. Skill was equally divided, (setting dubious tricks aside), strength was a little in favour of Devon, but not to much turn

of the balance, (for Cornwall had not produced a man of such magnitude for many years) experience was on Cornwall's side; condition, and lasting power, seemed to be pretty fairly on a par. What was to settle it? Devonshire knew.

That is to say, the fair County had its hopes,—though always too modest and frugal to back them—that something which it produces even more freely than fair cheeks and kind eyes, and of which the corner land is not so lavish—to wit fine temper, and tranquillity of nature, might come to their mother's assistance. Even for fighting, no man is at the best of himself, when exasperated. Far less can he be so in the gentler art.

A proverb of large equity, and time-honoured wisdom, declares (with the bluntness of its race) that “sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.” This maxim is pleasant enough to the goose; but the gander sputters wrathfully when it comes home to his breast. Polwarth felt it as a heinous outrage, that he had been the victim of his own device. As he faced his rival for the last encounter, a scowl came down upon his noble knobby forehead, his keen eyes glowered as with fire in his chest, and his wiry lips closed viciously. The Devon-

shire man, endowed with larger and less turbid outlook, perceived that the other's wrath was kindled, and his own duty was to feed the flame.

Accordingly, by quiet tricks, and flicks, such as no man would even feel unless already too peppery, he worked the moral system hard, and roused in the other's ample breast—or brain, if that be the combative part—a lofty disdain of discretion. Polwarth ground his teeth, and clenched his fist, spat fire—and all was up with him. One savage dash he made, which might have swept a milestone backward, breast clashed on breast, he swung too high, the great yellow legs forsook the earth, and the great red ones flashed between them, then the mighty frame span in the air like a flail, and fell flat as the blade of a turf-beater's spade.

“All over! All up! Needn't ask about that. Three times three for Devonshire! Again, again, again! Carnies, what can 'e say to that now?”

Wild triumph, fierce dejection, yearning to fight it out prevailed; every man's head was out of the government of his neck—when these two leading Counties were quenched alike. The great pole of red pine, fit mast for an Admiral, bearing all the structure overhead,

snapped, like a carrot, to a vast wild blast. In a weltering squash lay victor and vanquished, man with his fists up, and man eager to go at him, hearts too big to hold themselves for exultation, and hearts so low that wifely touch was needed to encourage them, glorious head that had won fifty shillings, and poor numskull that had lost a pot of beer. Prostrate all, with mouths full of tallow, sawdust, pitch, and another fellow's toes. Many were for a twelvemonth limpers; but nobody went to Churchyard.

CHAPTER VI.

A FIGHTING BOUT.

AFTER that mighty crash, every body with any sense left in its head went home. There was more to talk about than Perlycross had come across in half a century. And the worst of it was, that every blessed man had his own troubles first to attend to ; which is no fun at all, though his neighbour's are so pleasant. The Fair, in the covered market-place, had long been a dreary concern, contending vainly against the stronger charm of the wrestling booth, and still more vainly against the furious weather. Even the biggest and best fed flares—and they were quite as brisk in those days as they are now—gifted though they might be with rage and vigour, lost all self-control, and dashed in yellow forks, here there and everywhere, singeing sometimes their own author's whiskers. Like a man who lives too fast, they killed themselves ; and the poor Cheap-jacks,

the Universal Oracles, the Benevolent Bounty-men, chucking guineas right and left, the Master of Cupid's bower, who supplied every lass with a lord, and every lad with a lady having a lapful of a hundred thousand pounds—sadly they all strapped up, and lit their pipes, and shivered at that terrible tramp before them, cursing the weather, and their wives, and even the hallowed village of Perlycross.

Though the coaches had forsaken this ancient track from Exeter to London, and followed the broader turnpike roads, there still used to be every now and then a string of pack-horses, or an old stage-waggon, not afraid of hills, and making no fuss about time, but straggling at leisure through the pristine thoroughfares, thwarted less with toll-bars.

Notably, old Hill's *God-be-with-us* van left Exeter on Tuesdays, with the goodwill of three horses, some few hours in the afternoon, and might be trusted to appear at Perlycross according to the weather and condition of the roads. What more comfortable course of travel could there be for any one who understood it, and enjoyed sound sleep, and a good glass of ale at intervals, with room enough to dine inside if he thought fit, than the *God-be-with-us* van afforded? For old Hill was

always in charge of it himself, and expected no more than a penny a mile, and perhaps the power to drink the good health of any peaceful subject of the King, who might be inclined to come along with him, and listen to his moving tales. The horses were fat, and they rested at night, and took it easily in the daytime; and the leader had three little bells on his neck, looking, when you sat behind him, like a pair of scales; and without them he always declined to take a step, and the wheelers backed him up in that denial. For a man not bound to any domineering hour, or even to a self-important day, the broad-wheeled waggon belonging to old Hill—"Old-as-the-Hills" some flippant youngers called him—was as good an engine as need be, for crossing of the country, when it wanted to be crossed, and halting at any town of hospitable turn.

That same Shrove-Tuesday,—and it is well to mark the day, because Master Hill was so superior to dates—this man who asserted the dignity of our race, by not allowing matter to disturb him, was coming down hill with his heavy drag on, in a road that was soft from the goodness of the soil; when a man with two legs made of better stuff than ours, either came out of a gate across the van, or else fairly

walked it down by superior speed behind. "Ship ahoy!" he shouted; and old Hill was wide awake, for he had two or three barrels that would keep rolling into the small of his back—as he called it, with his usual oblivion of chronology—and so he was enabled to discern this man, and begin at his leisure to consider him.

If the man had shouted again, or shown any other symptom of small hurry, the driver—or properly speaking the drifter, for the horses did their own driving—would have felt some disappointment in him, as an inferior fellow-creature. But the man on foot, or at least on stumps, was in no more hurry than old Hill himself, and steadfastly trudged to the bottom of the hill, looking only at the horses—a very fine sign.

The land being Devon, it is needless to say that there was no inconsistency about it. Wherever one hill ends, there another begins, with just room enough between them for a horse to spread his legs, and shake himself with self-approbation. And he is pretty sure to find a crystal brook, purling across the road, and twinkling bright temptation to him.

"Hook up skid, and then 'e can jump in;" said old Hill in the hollow where the horses

backed, and he knew by the clank that it had been done, and then by a rattle on the floor behind him, that the stranger had embarked by the chains at the rear. After about a mile or so of soft low whistling, in which he excelled all Carriers, old Hill turned round with a pleasant grin, for there was a great deal of good about him.

“Going far?” He asked, as an opening of politeness, rather than of curiosity.

“Zort of a place, called Perlycrass;” replied the wooden-leg’d man, who was sitting on a barrel. Manifestly an ancient sailor, weather-beaten, and taciturn, the residue of a strong and handsome man.

The whole of this had been as nearly to the Carrier’s liking, as the words and deeds of any man can be to any other’s. Therefore before another mile had been travelled, old Hill turned round again, with a grin still sweeter.

“Pancake day, bain’t it?” was his very kind enquiry.

“B’lieve it be;” replied the other, in the best and truest British style. After this no more was lacking to secure old Hill’s regard than the very thing the sailor did. There was a little flap of canvas, like a loophole in the tilt, fitted for the use of chawers, and the

cleanliness of the floor. Timberlegs after using this, with much deliberation and great skill, made his way forward, and in deep silence poked old Hill with his open tobacco-box. If it were not silver, it was quite as good to look at, and as bright as if it held the freedom of the City; the tobacco, moreover, was of goodly reek, and a promise of inspiration such as never flows through Custom-house.

"Thank 'e, I'll have a blade bumbai. Will 'e zit upon that rope of onions?" The sailor shook his head; for the rim of a barrel, though apt to cut, cuts evenly like a good school-master.

"Long of Nelson?" Master Hill enquired, pointing to the places where the feet were now of deputy. The old Tar nodded; and then with that sensitive love of accuracy which marks the Tar, growled out, "Leastways, wan of them."

"And what come to t'other wan?" Master Hill was capable of really large human interest.

"Had 'un off, to square the spars, and for zake of vanity." He had no desire to pursue the subject, and closed it by a big squirt through the flap.

Old Hill nodded with manly approbation. Plymouth was his birthplace; and he knew

that other sons of Nelson had done this; for it balanced their bodies, and composed their minds with another five shillings a week for life, and the sale of the leg covered all expenses.

“You’'m a very ingenious man;” he glanced, as he spoke, at the sailor’s jury-rig; “I’ll war’n no doctor could a’ vitted ’e up, like thickey.”

“Vitted ’un myself with double swivel. Can make four knots an hour now. They doctors can undo ’e; but ’em can’t do ’e up. A cove can’t make sail upon a truck-head.”

“And what do ’e say to the weather, Cap’n?” Master Hill enquired of his passenger, when a few more compliments had passed, and the manes of the horses began to ruffle, and the tilt to sway and rattle with the waxing storm.

“Think us shall have as big a gale of wind as ever come out of the heavens,” the sailor replied, after stumping to the tail of the van, and gazing windwards; “heave to pretty smart, and make all snug, afore sunset, is my advice. Too much sail on this here little craft, for such a blow as us shall have to-night.”

“Can’t stop short of Taunton town.” Old Hill was famed for his obstinacy.

“Can ’e take in sail? Can ’e dowse this

here canvas? Can 'e reef it then somehow?" The old man shook his head. "Tell 'e what then, shipmate—if 'e carry on for six hours more, this here craft will be on her beam-ends, wi'out mainsail parteth from his lashings, sure as my name is Dick Herniman."

This Tar of the old school, better known as "timber-leg'd Dick," disembarked from the craft, whose wreck he had thus predicted, at a turning betwixt Perliton and Perlycross, and stumped away up a narrow lane, at a pace quite equal to that of the *God-be-with-us* van. The horses looked after him, as a specimen of biped hitherto beyond their experience; and old Hill himself, though incapable of amazement (which is a rapid process) confessed that there were some advantages in this form of human pedal, as well as fine economy of cloth and leather.

"How 'a doth get along, nimbler nor I could!" the Carrier reflected, as his nags drove on again. "Up to zummat ratchety, I'll be bound he be now. A leary old salt as ever lived. Never laughed once, never showed a smile, but gotten it all in his eyes he have; and the eyes be truer folks than the lips. Enough a'most to tempt a man to cut off 's own two legses."

Some hours later than this, and one hour

later than the downfall of the wrestler's roof, the long market-place, forming one side of the street—a low narrow building set against the churchyard wall, between the school and the lych-gate, looked as dismal, and dreary, and deserted, as the bitterest enemy of Fairs could wish. The torrents of rain, and fury of the wind, had driven all pleasure-seekers, in a grievously drenched and battered plight, to seek for wiser comfort; and only a dozen or so of poor creatures, either too tipsy to battle with the wind, or too reckless in their rags to care where they were, wallowed upon sacks, and scrabbled under the stanchion-boards, where the gaiety had been. The main gates, buckled back upon their heavy hinges, were allowed to do nothing in their proper line of business, until the Church-clock should strike twelve, for such was the usage; though as usual nobody had ever heard who ordained it. A few oil-lamps were still in their duty, swinging like welshed horn-poppies in the draught, and shedding a pale and spluttering light.

The man who bore the keys had gone home three times, keeping under hele with his oil-skins on, to ask his wife—who was a woman of some mark—whether he might not lock the gates, and come home and have his bit of bacon.

But she having strong sense of duty, and a good log blazing, and her cup of tea, had allowed him very generously to warm his hands a little, and then begged him to think of his family. This was the main thing that he had to do; and he went forth again into the dark, to do it.

Meanwhile, without anybody to take heed (for the Sergeant, ever vigilant, was now on guard in Spain), a small but choice company of human beings, was preparing for action in the old school-porch, which stood at the back of the building. Sticks they had, and handcuffs too, and supple straps, and loops of cord; all being men of some learning in the law, and the crooked ways of people out of harmony therewith. If there had been light enough to understand a smile, they would have smiled at one another, so positive were they that they had an easy job, and so grudgeful that the money should cut up so small. The two worthy constables of Perlycross felt certain that they could do it better by themselves; and the four invoked from Perliton were vexed, to have to act with village lubbers. Their orders were not to go nigh the wrestling, or show themselves inside the market-place, but to keep themselves quiet, and shun the weather, and what was

a great deal worse, the beer. Every now and then, the ideas of jolly noises, such as were appropriate to the time, were borne upon the rollicking wings of the wind into their silent vestibule, suggesting some wiping of lips, which, alas, were ever so much too dry already. At a certain signal, they were all to hasten across the corner of the churchyard, at the back of the market-place, and enter a private door at the east end of the building, after passing through the lych-gate.

Suddenly the rain ceased, as if at sound of trumpet; like the mouth of a cavern the sky flew open, and the wind, leaping three points of the compass, rushed upon the world from the chambers of the west. Such a blast, as had never been felt before, filled the whole valley of the Perle, and flung mowstack, and oakwood, farmhouse, and abbey, under the sweep of its wings as it flew. The roar of the air overpowered the crash of the ruin it made, and left no man the sound of his own voice to himself.

These great swoops of wind always lighten the sky; and as soon as the people blown down could get up, they were able to see the church-tower still upright, though many men swore that they heard it go rock. Very likely it rocked, but could they have heard it?

In the thick of the din of this awful night, when the church-clock struck only five instead of ten—and it might have struck fifty, without being heard—three men managed, one by one, and without any view of one another, to creep along the creases of the storm, and gain the gloomy shelter of the market-place. “Every man for himself,” is the universal law, when the heavens are against the whole race of us. Not one of these men cared to ask about the condition of the other two, nor even expected much to see them, though each was more resolute to be there himself, because of its being so difficult.

“Very little chance of Timberlegs to-night,” said one to another, as two of them stood in deep shadow against the back wall, where a voice could be heard if pitched in the right direction; “he could never make way again’ a starm like this.”

“Thou bee’st a liar,” replied a gruff voice, as the clank of metal on the stone was heard. “Timberlegs can goo, where flesh and bone be mollichops.” He carried a staff like a long handspike, and prodded the biped on his needless feet, to make him wish to be relieved of them.

“Us be all here now,” said the third man, who seemed in the wavering gloom to fill half

the place. "What hast thou brought us for, Timber-leg'd Dick?"

"Bit of a job, same as three months back. Better than clam-pits, worn't it now? Got a good offer for thee too, Harvey, for that old ramshackle place. Handy hole for a louderin' job, and not far from them clam-pits."

"Ay, so a' be. Never thought of that. And must have another coney, now they wise 'uns have vound out Nigger's Nock. Lor' what a laugh we had, Jem and I, at they fules of Perlycrass!"

"Then Perlycross will have the laugh at thee. Harvey Tremlett, and James Kettel, I arrest 'e both, in the name of His Majesty the King."

Six able-bodied men (who had entered, unheard in the roar of the gale, and unseen in the gloom), stood with drawn staffs, heels together, and shoulder to shoulder, in a semi-circle, enclosing the three conspirators.

"Read thy warrant aloud," said Dick Herniman, striking his handspike upon the stones, and taking command in right of intellect; while the other twain laid their backs against the wall, and held themselves ready for the issue.

Dick had hit a very hard nail on the head.

None of these constables had been young enough to undergo Sergeant Jakes, and thenceforth defy the most lofty examiner.

"Didn't hear what 'e zed," replied head-constable, making excuse of the wind, which had blown him but little of the elements. But he lowered his staff, and held consultation.

"Then I zay it again," shouted Timber-leg'd Dick, stumping forth with a power of learning, for he had picked up good leisure in hospitals; "if thou representest the King, read His Majesty's words, afore taking his name in vain."

These six men were ready, and resolute enough, to meet any bodily conflict; but the literary crisis scared them.

"Can 'e do it, Jack?" "Don't know as I can." "Wish my boy Bill was here." "Don't run in my line"—and so on.

"If none on 'e knows what he be about," said the man with the best legs to stand upon, advancing into the midst of them, "I know a deal of the law; and I tell 'e, as a friend of the King, who hath lost two legs for 'un, in the Royal Navy, there can't be no lawful arrest made here. And the liberty of the subject cometh in, the same as a' doth again' highway-men. Harvey Tremlett, and Jem Kettel, the

law be on your side, to 'protect the liberty of the subject.'"

This was enough for the pair who had stood, as law-abiding Englishmen, against the wall, with their big fists doubled, and their great hearts doubting. "Here goo'th for the liberty of the subject," cried Harvey Tremlett, striding forth; "I shan't strike none as don't strike me. But if a' doth, a' must look out."

The constables wavered, in fear of the law, and doubt of their own duty; for they had often heard that every man had a right to know what he was arrested for. Unluckily one of them made a blow with his staff at Harvey Tremlett; then he dropped on the flags with a clump in his ear, and the fight in a moment was raging.

Somebody knocked Jemmy Kettel on the head, as being more easy to deal with; and then the blood of the big man rose. Three stout fellows fell upon him all together, and heavy blows rung on the drum of his chest, from truncheons plied like wheel-spokes. Forth flew his fist-clubs right and left, one of them meeting a staff in the air, and shattering it back into its owner's face. Never was the peace of the King more broken; no man could see what became of his blows, legs and arms went

about like windmills, substance and shadow were all as one, till the substance rolled upon the ground, and groaned.

This dark fight resembled the clashing of a helgerow in the fury of a midnight storm; when the wind has got in and cannot get out, when ground-ash, and sycamore, pole, stub, and saplin, are dashing and whirling against one another, and even the sturdy oak-tree in the trough is swaying, and creaking, and swinging on its bole.

“Zoonder not to kill e’er a wan of ’e, I ’ood. But by the Lord, if ’e comes they byses”—shouted Harvey Tremlett, as a rope was thrown over his head from behind, but cut in half a second by Herniman—“more of ’e, be there?” as the figures thickened—“have at ’e then, wi’ zumnat more harder nor visties be!”

He wrenched from a constable his staff, and strode onward, being already near the main gate now. As he whirled the heavy truncheon round his head, the constables hung back, having two already wounded, and one in the grip of reviving Jem, who was rolling on the floor with him. “Zurrender to His Majesty;” they called out, preferring the voluntary system.

“ A varden for the lot of 'e ! ” the big man said, and he marched in a manner that presented it.

But not so did he walk off, blameless and respectable. He had kept his temper wonderfully, believing the law to be on his side, after all he had done for the County.

Now his nature was pressed a little too hard for itself, when just as he had called out— “ coom along, Jem ; there be nort to stop 'e, Timberlegs ; ” retiring his forces with honour— two figures, hitherto out of the moil, stood across him at the mouth of exit.

“ Who be you ? ” he asked, with his anger in a flame ; for they showed neither staff of the King, nor warrant. “ Volunteers, be 'e ? Have a care what be about.”

“ Harvey Tremlett, here you stop.” Said a tall man, square in front of him. But luckily for his life, the lift of the sky showed that his hair was silvery.

“ Never hits an old man. You lie there ; ” Tremlett took him with his left hand, and laid him on the stones. But meanwhile the other flung his arms around his waist.

“ Wult have a zettler ? Then thee shall,” cried the big man, tearing him out like a child, and swinging his truncheon, for to knock him

on the head, and Jemmy Fox felt that his time was come.

Down came the truncheon, like a paviour's rammer, and brains would have weltered on the floor like suds, but a stout arm dashed across, and received the crash descending.

"Pumpkins!" cried the smiter, wondering much what he had smitten, as two bodies rolled between his legs and on the stones. "Coom along, Jemmy boy. Nare a wan to stop 'e."

The remnant of the constables upon their legs fell back. The Lord was against them. They had done their best. The next job for them was to heal their wounds, and get an allowance for them, if they could.

Now the human noise was over, but the wind roared on, and the rushing of the clouds let the stars look down again. Tremlett stood victorious in the middle of the gateway. Hurry was a state of mind beyond his understanding. Was everybody satisfied? Well, no one came for more. He took an observation of the weather, and turned round.

"Shan't bide here no longer," he announced. "Dick, us'll vinish up our clack to my place. Rain be droud up, and I be off."

"No, Harvey Tremlett, you will not be off.

You will stay here like a man, and stand your trial."

Mr. Penniloe's hand was upon his shoulder, and the light of the stars, thrown in vaporous waves, showed the pale face firmly regarding him.

"Well, and if I says no to it, what can 'e do?"

"Hold you by the collar, as my duty is." The Parson set his teeth, and his delicate white fingers tightened their not very formidable grasp.

"Sesh!" said the big man, with a whistle, and making as if he could not move. "When a man be baten, a' must gie in. Wun't 'e let me goo, Passon? Do 'e let me goo."

"Tremlett, my duty is to hold you fast. I owe it to a dear friend of mine, as well as to my parish."

"Well, you be a braver man than most of 'em, I zimmeth. But do 'e tell a poor chap, as have no chance at all wi' 'e, what a' hath dood, to be lawed for 'un so crule now."

"Prisoner, as if you did not know. You are charged with breaking open Colonel Waldron's grave, and carrying off his body."

"Oh Lord! Oh Lord in heaven!" shouted Harvey Tremlett. "Jem Kettel, hark to thiccy! Timberlegs, do 'e hear thic? All they blessed

constables, as has got their bellyful, and ever so many wise gen'lemen too, what do 'e think 'em be arter us for? Arter us for resurrectioneering! Never heered tell such a joke in all my life. They hosebirds to *Ivy-bush* cries 'Carnwall for ever!' But I'm blest if I don't cry out 'Perlycrass for ever!' Oh Lord, oh Lord! Was there ever such a joke? Don't 'e hold me, sir, for half a minute, just while I has out my laugh—fear I should throw 'e down with shaking so."

Timber-leg'd Dick came up to his side, and not being of the laughing kind, made up for it by a little hornpipe in the lee; his metal feet striking, from the flints pitched there, sparks enough to light a dozen pipes; while Kettel, though damaged severely about the mouth, was still able to compass a broad and loud guffaw.

"Prisoners," Mr. Penniloe said severely, for he misliked the ridicule of his parish; "this is not at all a matter to be laughed at. The evidence against you is very strong, I fear."

"Zurrender, zurrender, to His Majesty the King!" cried Tremlett, being never much at argument. "Constables, if 'ee can goo, take charge. But I 'out have no handcuffs, mind. Wudn't a gie'd 'ee a clout, if I had knawed it. Zarve 'ee right though, for not rading of thic warrant-papper. Jemmy boy, you zurrender

to the King; and I be Passon's prisoner. Honour bright fust though—nort to come agin' us, unless a' be zet down in warrant-papper. Passon, thee must gi'e thy word for that. Timberlegs, coom along for layyer."

"Certainly, I give my word, as far as it will go, that no other charge shall be brought against you. The warrant is issued for that crime only. Prove yourselves guiltless of that, and you are free."

"Us won't be very long in prison then. A day or two bain't much odds to we."

CHAPTER VII.

GENTLE AS A LAMB.

OF the nine people wounded in that Agoräic struggle, which cast expiring lustre on the Fairs of Perlycross, every one found his case most serious to himself, and still more so to his wife; and even solemn, in the presence of those who had to settle compensation. Herniman had done some execution, as well as received a nasty splinter of one leg, which broke down after his hornpipe; and Kettel had mauled the man who rolled over with him. But, as appeared when the case was heard, Tremlett had by no means done his best; and his lawyer put it touchingly and with great effect, that he was loth to smite the sons of his native county, when he had just redeemed their glory, by noble discomfiture of Cornwall.

One man only had a parlous wound; and as is generally ordained in human matters, this was the one most impartial of all, the one who

had no interest of his own to serve, the one who was present simply out of pure benevolence, and a Briton's love of order. So at least his mother said; and every one acknowledged that she was a woman of high reasoning powers. Many others felt for him, as who would have done the same, with like opportunity.

For only let a healthy, strong, and earnest-minded Englishman—to use a beloved compound epithet of the day—hear of a hot and lawful fight impending, with people involved in it, of whom he has some knowledge, and we may trust him heartily to be there or thereabouts, to see—as he puts it to his conscience—fair play. But an if he chance to be in love just then, with a very large percentage of despair to reckon up, and one of the combatants is in the count against him, can a doubt remain of his eager punctuality?

This was poor Frank Gilham's case. Dr. Gronow was a prudent man, and liked to have the legions on his side. He perceived that young Frank was a staunch and stalwart fellow, sure to strike a good blow on a friend's behalf. He was well aware also of his love for Christie, and could not see why it should come to nothing. While Jemmy Fox's faith in the resources of the law, and in his own prowess as

a power in reserve, were not so convincing to the elder mind. "Better make sure, than be too certain," was a favourite maxim of this shrewd old stager; and so without Jemmy's knowledge he invited Frank, to keep out of sight, unless wanted.

This measure saved the life of Dr. Fox, and that of Harvey Tremlett too, some of whose brothers had adorned the gallows. Even as it was, Jemmy Fox lay stunned, with the other man's arm much inserted in his hat. Where he would have been without that arm for buffer, the Cherub, who sits on the chimney-pots of Harley Street, alone can say. Happily the other doctor was unhurt, and left in full possession of his wits, which he at once exerted. After examining the wounded yeoman, who had fainted from the pain and shock, he borrowed a mattress from the rectory, a spring-cart and truss of hay from Channing the baker, and various other appliances; and thus in spite of the storm conveyed both patients to hospital. This was the *Old Barn* itself, because all surgical needs would be forthcoming there more readily, and so it was wiser to decline Mr. Penniloe's offer of the rectory.

With the jolting of the cart, and the freshness of the air, Fox began to revive ere long;

and though still very weak and dizzy, was able to be of some service at his own dwelling-place ; and although he might not, when this matter first arose, have shown all the gratitude which the sanguine do expect, in return for Frank Gilham's loyalty, he felt very deep contrition now, when he saw this frightful fracture, and found his own head quite uncracked.

The six constables, though they had some black eyes, bruised limbs, and broken noses, and other sources of regret, were (in strict matter of fact, and without any view to compensation) quite as well as could be expected. And as happens too often, the one who groaned the most had the least occasion for it. It was only the wick of a lamp, that had dropped, without going out, on this man's collar, and burned a little hole in his *niddick*, as it used to be called in Devonshire.

Tremlett readily gave his word, that no escape should be attempted ; and when Mrs. Muggridge came to know that this was the man who had saved her master, nothing could be too good for him. So constables and prisoners were fed and cared for, and stowed for the night in the long schoolroom, with hail-stones hopping in the fireplace.

In the morning, the weather was worse

again; for this was a double-barrel'd gale, as an ignorant man might term it; or rather perhaps two several gales, arising from some vast disturbance, and hitting into one another. Otherwise, why should it be known and remembered even to the present day, as the great Ash-Wednesday gale, although it began on Shrove-Tuesday, and in many parts raged most fiercely then? At Perlycross certainly there was no such blast upon the second day, as that which swept the Abbey down; when the wind leaped suddenly to the west, and the sky fell open, as above recorded.

Upon that wild Ash-Wednesday forenoon, the curate stood in the churchyard mourning, even more than the melancholy date requires. Where the old Abbey had stood for ages (backing up the venerable church with grand dark-robed solemnity, and lifting the buckler of ancient faith above many a sleeping patriarch) there was nothing but a hideous gap, with murky clouds galloping over it. Shorn of its ivy curtain by the tempest of last Sunday, the mighty frame had reeled, and staggered, and with one crash gone to ground last night, before the impetuous welkin's weight.

“Is all I do to be always vain, and worse than vain—destructive, hurtful, baneful, fatal

I might say, to the very objects for which I strive? Here is the church, unfinished, leaky, with one of its corners gone underground, and the grand stone screen smashed in two; here is the Abbey, or alas not here, but only an ugly pile of stones! Here is the outrage to my dear friend, and the shame to the parish as black as ever; for those men clearly know nothing of it. And here, or at any rate close at hand, the sad drawback upon all good works; for at Lady-day in pour the bills, and my prayers (however earnest) will not pay them. It has pleased the Lord, in His infinite wisdom, to leave me very short of cash."

Unhappily his best hat had been spoiled, in that interview with the four vergers; and in his humility he was not sure that the one on his head was good enough even to go to the Communion service. However it need not have felt unworthy; for there was not a soul in the church to be adjured, save that which had been under its own brim. The clerk was off for Perliton, swearing—even at his time of life!—that he had been subpoenaed, as if that could be on such occasion; and as for the pupils, all bound to be in church, the Hopper had been ordered by the Constables to present himself to the Magistrates (though all the

Constables denied it) and Pike, and Mopuss, felt it their duty to go with him.

In a word, all Perlycross was off, though services of the Church had not yet attained their present continuity; and though every woman, and even man, had to plod three splashy miles, with head on chest, in the teeth of the gale up the river. How they should get into the room, when there, was a question that never occurred to them. There they all yearned to be; and the main part, who could not raise a shilling, or prove themselves Uncles, or Aunts, or former sweethearts of the two Constables who kept the door, had to crouch under dripping shrubs outside the windows, and spoiled all Squire Mockham's young crocusses.

That gentleman was so upright, and thoroughly impartial, that to counteract his own predilections for a champion wrestler, he had begged a brother-magistrate to come and sit with him on this occasion; not Sir Edwin Sanford, who was of the Quorum for Somerset, but a man of some learning and high esteem, the well-known Dr. Morshead. Thus there would be less temptation for any tattler to cry, "hole and corner," as spiteful folk rejoice to do, while keeping in that same place themselves. Although there was less

perhaps of mischief-making in those days than now; and there could be no more.

The Constables marched in, with puff and blow, like victors over rebels, and as if they had carried the prisoners captive, every yard of the way, from Perlycross. All of them began to talk at once, and to describe with more vigour than truth the conflict of the night before. But Dr. Morshead stopped them short, for the question of resistance was not yet raised. What the Bench had first to decide was whether a case could be made out for a *mittimus*, in pursuance of the warrant, to the next Petty Sessions on Monday; whence the prisoners would be remitted probably to the Quarter Sessions.

The two accused stood side by side (peaceful and decorous, as if they were accustomed to it); and without any trepidation admitted their identity. It was rather against their interests that the Official Clerk was absent—this not being a stated meeting, but held for special purpose—for Magistrates used to be a little nervous, without their proper adviser; and in fear of permitting the guilty to escape, they sometimes remanded upon insufficient grounds.

In the present case, there was nothing whatever to connect these two men with the crime,

except the testimony of Joe Crang, and what might be regarded as their own admission, overheard by Dr. Fox. The latter was not in court, nor likely so to be; and as for the blacksmith's evidence, however positive it might seem, what did it amount to? And such as it was, it was torn to rags, through the quaking of the deponent.

For a sharp little lawyer started up, as lawyers are sure to do everywhere, and crossed the room to where Herniman sat, drumming the floor with metallic power, and looking very stolid. But a glance had convinced the keen Attorney, that here were the brains of the party, and a few short whispers settled it. "Guinea, if 'e gets 'em off; if not, ne'er a farden." "Right!" said the lawyer, and announced himself.

"Blickson, for the defence, your Worships—Maurice Blickson of Silverton." The proper bows were interchanged; and then came Crang's excruciation. Already this sturdy and very honest fellow, was as he elegantly described it, in a "lantern-sweat" of terror. It is one thing to tell a tale to two friends in a potato-field, and another to narrate the same on oath, with four or five quills in mysterious march, two most worshipful signors bending

brows of doubt upon you, and thirty or forty faces scowling, at every word—"What a liar you be!" And when on the top of all this, stands up a noble gentleman, with keen eyes, peremptory voice, contemptuous smiles, and angry gestures, all expressing his Christian sorrow, that the Devil should have so got hold of you,—what blacksmith, even of poetic anvil (whence all rhythm and metre spring) can have any breath left in his own bellows?

Joe Crang had fallen on his knees, to take the oath; as witnesses did, from a holy belief that this turned the rungs of the gallows the wrong way; and then he had told his little tale most sadly, as one who hopes never to be told of it again. His business had thriven, while his health was undermined; through the scores of good people, who could rout up so much as a knife that wanted a rivet, or even a boy with one tooth pushing up another; and though none of them paid more than fourpence for things that would last them a fortnight to talk about, their money stayed under the thatch, while Joe spent nothing but a wink for all his beer.

But ah, this was no winking time! Crang was beginning to shuffle off, with his knuckles to his forehead; and recovering his mind so

loudly that he got in a word about the quality of his iron—which for the rest of his life he would have cited, to show how he beat they Justesses—when he found himself recalled, and told to put his feet together. This, from long practise of his art, had become a difficulty to him, and in labouring to do it he lost all possibility of bringing his wits into the like position. This order showed Blickson to be almost a Verulam in his knowledge of mankind. Joe Crang recovered no self-possession, on his own side of better than a gallon strong.

“Blacksmith, what o’clock is it now?”

Crang put his ears up, as if he expected the Church-clock to come to his aid; and then with a rally of what he was hoping for, as soon as he got round the corner, replied—
“Four and a half, your honour.”

“I need not remind your Worships,” said Blickson, when the laughter had subsided; “that this fellow’s evidence, even if correct, proves nothing whatever against my Clients. But just to show what it is worth, I will, with your Worships’ permission, put a simple question to him. He has sworn that it was two o’clock, on a foggy morning, and with no Church-clock to help him, when he saw, in

his night-mare this ghostly vision. Perhaps he should have said—‘four and a half;’ which in broad daylight is his idea of the present hour. Now, my poor fellow, did you swear, or did you not, on a previous occasion, that one of the men who so terrified you out of your heavy sleep, was Dr. James Fox—a gentleman, Dr. Morshead, of your own distinguished Profession. Don’t shuffle with your feet, Crang, nor yet with your tongue. Did you swear that, or did you not?”

“Well, if I did, twadn’t arkerate.”

“In plain English, you perjured yourself on that occasion. And yet you expect their Worships to believe you now! Now look at the other man, the tall one. By which of his features, do you recognize him now, at four and a half, in the morning?”

“Dun’now what veitchers be. Knows ’un by his size, and manner of standin’. Should like to hear ’s voice, if no object to you, layyer.”

“My friend, you call me by your own name. Such is your confusion of ideas. Will your Worships allow me to assist this poor numskull? The great Cornish wrestler is here, led by that noble fraternal feeling, which is such a credit to all men distinguished in any walk

of life. Mr. Polwarth of Bodmin, will you kindly stand by the side of your brother in a very noble art?"

It was worth a long journey in bad weather (as Squire Mockham told his guests at his dinner-party afterwards, and Dr. Morshead and his son confirmed it) to see the two biggest growths of Devonshire and of Cornwall standing thus amicably side by side, smiling a little slyly at each other, and blinking at their Worships with some abashment, as if to say—"this is not quite in our line."

For a moment the audience forgot itself, and made itself audible with three loud cheers. "Silence!" cried their Worships, but not so very sternly.

"Reckon, I could drow 'e next time;" said Cornwall.

"Wun't zay but what 'e maight;" answered Devon courteously.

"Now, little blacksmith," resumed the lawyer, though Joe Crang was considerably bigger than himself; "will you undertake to swear, upon your hope of salvation, which of those two gentlemen you saw, that night?"

Joe Crang stared at the two big men, and his mind gave way within him. He was dressed in his best, and his wife had polished

up his cheeks and nose with yellow soap, which gleamed across his vision with a kind of glaze; and therein danced pen, ink, and paper, the figures of the big men, the faces of their Worships, and his own hopes of salvation.

"Maight 'a been Carnisher;" he began to stammer, with a desire to gratify his county; but a hiss went round the room from Devonian sense of justice; and to strike a better balance, he finished in despair—"Wull then, it waz both on 'em."

"Stand down sir!" Dr. Morshead shouted sternly, while Blickson went through a little panorama of righteous astonishment and disgust. All the audience roared, and a solid farmer called out—"Don't come near me, you infernal liar," as poor Crang sought shelter behind his top-coat. So much for honesty, simplicity, and candour, when the nervous system has broken down!

"After that, I should simply insult the intelligence of your Worships;" continued the triumphant lawyer, "by proceeding to address you. Perhaps I should ask you to commit that wretch for perjury; but I leave him to his conscience, if he has one."

"The case is dismissed," Dr. Morshead announced, after speaking for a moment to his

colleague. "Unless there is any intention to charge these men with resisting or assaulting officers, in the execution of their warrant. It has been reported, though not formally, that some bystander was considerably injured. If any charge is entered on either behalf, we are ready to receive the depositions."

The constables, who had been knocked about, were beginning to consult together, when Blickson slipped among them, after whispering to Herniman, and a good deal of nodding of heads took place, while pleasant ideas were interchanged, such as, "handsome private compensation;" "twenty-five pounds to receive to-night, and such men are always generous;" "a magnificent supper-party at the least, if they are free. If not, all must come to nothing."

The worthy constabulary—now represented by a still worthier body, and one of still finer feeling—perceived the full value of these arguments; and luckily for the accused, Dr. Gronow was not present, being sadly occupied at Old Barn.

"Although there is no charge, and no sign of any charge, your Worships, and therefore I have no *locus standi*;" Mr. Blickson had returned to his place, and adopted an airy and

large-hearted style; "I would crave the indulgence of the Bench, for one or two quite informal remarks; my object being to remove every stigma from the characters of my respected Clients. On the best authority I may state, that their one desire, and intention, was to surrender, like a pair of lambs"—at this description a grin went round, and the learned Magistrates countenanced it—"if they could only realise the nature of the charge against them. But when they demanded, like Englishmen, to know why their liberty should be suddenly abridged, what happened? No one answered them! All those admirable men were doubtless eager to maintain the best traditions of the law; but the hurricane out-roared them. They laboured to convey their legal message; but where is education, when the sky falls on its head? On the other hand, one of these law-abiding men had been engaged gloriously, in maintaining the athletic honour of his county. This does not appear to have raised in him at all the pugnacity, that might have been expected. He strolled into the market-place, partly to stretch his poor bruised legs, and partly perhaps to relieve his mind; which men of smaller nature would have done, by tippling. Suddenly he is surrounded by a

crowd of very strong men in the dark. The Fair has long been over; the lights are burning low; scarcely enough of fire in them to singe the neck of an enterprising member of our brave Constabulary. In the thick darkness, and hubbub of the storm, the hero who has redeemed the belt, and therewith the ancient fame of our county, supposes—naturally supposes, charitable as his large mind is, that he is beset for the sake of the money, which he has not yet received, but intends to distribute so freely, when he gets it. The time of this honourable Bench is too valuable to the public to be wasted over any descriptions of a petty skirmish, no two of which are at all alike. My large-bodied Client, the mighty wrestler, might have been expected to put forth his strength. It is certain that he did not do so. The man, who had smitten down the pride of Cornwall, would strike not a blow against his own county. He gave a playful push or two, a chuck under the chin, such as a pretty milkmaid gets, when she declines a sweeter touch. I marvel at his wonderful self-control. His knuckles were shattered by a blow from a staff; like a roof in a hailstorm his great chest rang—for the men of Perliton can hit hard—yet is there anything to show

that he even endeavoured to strike in return? And how did it end? In the very noblest way. The Pastor of the village, a most saintly man, but less than an infant in Harvey Tremlett's hands, appears at the gate, when there is no other let or hindrance to the freedom of a Briton. Is he thrust aside rudely? Is he kicked out of the way? Nay, he lays a hand upon the big man's breast, the hand of a Minister of the Cross. He explains that the law, by some misapprehension, is fain to apprehend this simple-minded hero. The nature of the sad mistake is explained; and to use a common metaphor, which excited some derision just now, but which I repeat, with facts to back me,—gentle as a lamb, yonder lion surrenders!

“The lamb is very fortunate in his shepherd;” said Dr. Morshead drily, as the lawyer sat down, under general applause. “But there is nothing before the Bench, Mr. Blickson. What is the object of all this eloquence?”

“The object of my very simple narrative, your Worships, is to discharge my plain duty to my clients. I would ask this Worshipful Bench, not only to dismiss a very absurd application, but also to add their most weighty opinions, that Harvey Tremlett, and James

Fox—no, I beg pardon, that was the first mistake of this ever erroneous blacksmith—James Kettel, I should say, have set a fine example of perfect submission to the law of the land.”

“Oh come, Mr. Blickson, that is out of the record. We pronounce no opinion upon that point. We simply adjudge that the case be now dismissed.”

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INLAND RUN.

“WON’ERFUL well, ’e doed it, sir. If ever I gets into Queer Street, you be the one to get me out.”

This well-merited compliment was addressed by Dick Herniman to Attorney Blickson, at a convivial gathering held that same afternoon, to celebrate the above recorded triumph of Astræa. The festal party had been convoked at the Wheatsheaf Tavern in Perliton Square, and had taken the best room in the house, looking out of two windows upon that noble parallelogram, which Perliton never failed to bring with it, orally, when it condescended to visit Perlycross. The party had no idea of being too abstemious, the object of its existence being the promotion, as well as the assertion, of the liberty of the subject.

Six individuals were combining for this lofty purpose, to wit the two gentlemen so unjustly

charged, and their shrewd ally of high artistic standing, that very able lawyer who had vindicated right; also Captain Timberlegs, and Horatio Peckover, Esquire; and pleasant it is as well as strange to add, Master Joseph Crang of Susscot, blacksmith, farrier, and engineer. For now little differences of opinion, charges of perjury and body-snatching, assault and battery, and general malfeasance, were sunk in the large liberality of success, the plenitude of John Barleycorn, and the congeniality of cordials.

That a stripling like the Hopper should be present was a proof of some failure of discretion upon his part, for which he atoned by a tremendous imposition; while the prudent Pike, and the modest Mopuss, had refused with short gratitude this banquet, and gone home. But the Hopper regarded himself as a witness—although he had not been called upon—in right of his researches at Blackmarsh, and declared that officially he must hear the matter out, for an explanation had been promised. The greater marvel was perhaps that Joe Crang should be there, after all the lash of tongue inflicted on him. But when their Worships were out of sight, Blickson had taken him by the hand, in a truly handsome

manner, and assured him of the deep respect he felt, and ardent admiration, at his too transparent truthfulness. Joe Crang, whose heart was very sore, had shed a tear at this touching tribute, and was fain to admit, when the lawyer put it so, that he was compelled in his own art to strike the finest metal the hardest.

So now all six were in very sweet accord, having dined well, and now refining the firmer substances into the genial flow. Attorney Blickson was in the chair, for which nature had well qualified him; and perhaps in the present more ethereal age, he might have presided in a "syndicate" producing bubbles of gold and purple, subsiding into a bluer tone.

For this was a man of quick natural parts, and gifted in many ways for his profession. Every one said that he should have been a Barrister; for his character would not have mattered so much, when he went from one town to another, and above all to such a place as London, where they think but little of it. If he could only stay sober, and avoid promiscuous company, and make up his mind to keep his hand out of quiet people's pockets, and do a few other respectable things, there was no earthly reason that any one could see,

why he should not achieve fifty guineas a day, and even be a match for Mopuss K. C., the father of Mr. Penniloe's fattest pupil.

"This honourable company has a duty now before it;" Mr. Blickson drew attention by rapping on the table, and then leaning back in his chair, with a long pipe rested on a bowl of punch, or rather nothing but a punch-bowl now. On his right hand sat Herniman, the giver of the feast—or the lender at least, till prize-money came to fist—and on the other side was Tremlett, held down by heavy nature from the higher flights of Bacchus, because no bowl was big enough to make him drunk; "yes, a duty, gentlemen, which I, as the representative of Law cannot see neglected. We have all enjoyed one another's 'good health,' in the way in which it concerns us most; we have also promoted, by such prayers, the weal of the good Squire Mockham, and that of another gentleman, who presented himself as *Amicus curiæ*—gentlemen, excuse a sample of my native tongue—a little prematurely perhaps last night, and left us to sigh for him vainly to-day. I refer to the gentleman, with whom another, happily now present, and the soul of our party, and rejoicing equally in the Scriptural name of James, was

identified in an early stage of this still mysterious history, by one of the most conscientious, truthful and self-possessed of all witnesses, I have ever had the honour yet of handling in the box. At least he was not in the box, because there was none; but he fully deserves to be kept in a box. I am sorry to see you smile—at my prolixity I fear; therefore I will relieve you of it. Action is always more urgent than words. Duty demands that we should have this bowl refilled. Pleasure, which is the fairer sex of duty, as every noble sailor knows too well, awaits us next in one of her most tempting forms, as an ancient Poet has observed. If it is sweet to witness from the shore the travail of another, how much sweeter to have his trials brought before us over the flowing bowl, while we rejoice in his success and share it. Gentlemen, I call upon Captain Richard Herniman for his promised narrative of that great expedition, which by some confusion of the public mind has become connected with a darker enterprise. Captain Richard Herniman to the fore!”

“Bain’t no Cappen, and han’t got no big words,” said Timber-leg’d Dick, getting up with a rattle, and standing very staunchly; “but can’t refuse this here gentleman, under

the circumstances. And every word as I says will be true."

After this left-handed compliment, received with a cheer in which the lawyer joined, the ancient salt premised that among good friends, he relied on honour bright, that there should be no dirty turn. To this all pledged themselves most freely; and he trusting rather in his own reservations than their pledge, that no harm should ever come of it, shortly told his story, which in substance was as follows. But some names which he omitted have been filled in, now that all fear of enquiry is over.

In the previous September, when the nights were growing long, a successful run across the Channel had been followed by a peaceful, and well-conducted, landing at a lonely spot on the Devonshire coast, where that pretty stream the Otter flows into the sea. That part of the shore was very slackly guarded then; and none of the authorities got scent, while scent was hot, of this cordial international transaction. Some of these genuine wares found a home promptly and pleasantly in the neighbourhood, among farmers, tradesmen, squires, and others, including even some loyal rectors, and zealous Justices of the Peace, or peradventure their wives and daughters capable of minding their

own keys. Some, after dwelling in caves, or furze-ricks, barns, potato-buries, or hollow trees, went inland, or to Sidmouth, or Seaton, or anywhere else where a good tax-payer had plastered up his windows, or put "Dairy" on the top of them.

* But the prime of the cargo, and the very choicest goods, such as fine Cognac, rich silk and rare lace, too good for pedlars, and too dear for Country parsons, still remained stored away very snugly, in some old dry cellars beneath the courtyard of a ruined house at Budleigh; where nobody cared to go poking about, because the old gentleman who lived there once had been murdered nearly thirty years ago, for informing against smugglers, and was believed to be in the habit of walking there now. These shrewd men perceived how just it was that he should stand guard in the spirit over that which in the flesh he had betrayed, especially as his treason had been caused by dissatisfaction with his share in a very fine contraband venture. Much was now committed to his posthumous sense of honour; for the free-traders vowed that they could make a thousand pounds of these choice wares in any wealthy town, like Bath, or Bristol, or even Weymouth, then more fashionable than it is now.

But suddenly their bright hopes were dashed. Instead of reflecting on the value of these goods, they were forced to take hasty measures for their safety. A very bustling man, of a strange suspicious turn, as dry as a mull of snuff, and as rough as a nutmeg-grater; in a word a Scotchman out of sympathy with the natives, was appointed to the station at Sidmouth, and before he unpacked his clothes began to rout about, like a dog who has been trained to hunt for morels. Very soon he came across some elegant French work, in cottages, or fishers' huts, or on the necks of milkmaids; and nothing would content him until he had discovered, even by such deep intriguery as the distribution of lollipops, the history of the recent enterprise.

"Let bygones be bygones," would have been the Christian sentiment of any new-comer at all connected with the district; and Sandy MacSpudder must have known quite well, that his curiosity was in the worst of taste, and the result too likely to cast discredit on his own predecessor, who was threatening to leave the world just then, with a large family unprovided for. Yet such was this Scotchman's pertinacity and push, that even the little quiet village of Bulleigh, which has nothing to do

but to listen to its own brook prattling to the gently smiling valley, even this rose-fringed couch of peace was ripped up by the slashing of this rude Lieutenant's cutlass. A spectre, even of the best Devonian antecedents, was of less account than a scare-crow to this matter-of-fact Lowlander. "A' can smell a rat in that ghostie," was his profane conclusion.

This put the spirited free-traders on their mettle. Fifty years ago, that Scotch interloper would have learned the restful qualities of a greener sod than his. But it is of interest to observe how the English nature softened, when the martial age had lapsed. It scarcely occurred to this gentler generation, that a bullet from behind a rock would send this spry enquirer to solve larger questions on his own account. Savage brutality had less example now.

The only thing therefore was to over-reach this man. He was watching all the roads along the coast, to east and west; but to guard all the tangles of the inward roads, and the blessed complexity of Devonshire lanes would have needed an army of pure natives. Whereas this busy foreigner placed no faith in any man born in our part of the world—such was his

judgment—and had called for a draft of fellows having different vowels.

This being so, it served him right to be largely out-witted by the thick-heads he despised. And he had made such a fuss about it, at head-quarters, and promised such wonders if the case were left to him, that when he captured nothing but a string of worn-out kegs filled with diluted sheep-wash, he not only suffered for a week from gastric troubles—through his noseless hurry to identify Cognac—but also received a stinging reprimand, and an order for removal to a very rugged coast, where he might be more at home with the language and the manners. And his predecessor's son obtained that sunny situation. Thus is zeal rewarded always, when it does not win the seal.

None will be surprised to hear that the simple yet masterly stratagem, by means of which the fair western county vindicated its commercial rights against northern arrogance and ignoble arts, was the invention of a British Tar, an old Agamemnon, a true heart of oak, re-membered also in the same fine material. The lessons of Nelson had not been thrown away; this humble follower of that great hero first mis-led the adversary, and then broke his

line. Invested as he was by superior forces seeking access even to his arsenal, he despatched to the eastward a lumbering craft, better known to landsmen as a waggon, heavily laden with straw newly threshed, under which was stowed a tier of ancient kegs, which had undergone too many sinkings in the sea (when a landing proved unsafe) to be trusted any more with fine contents. Therefore they now contained sheep-wash, diluted from the brook to the complexion of old brandy. In the loading of this waggon special mystery was observed, which did not escape the vigilance of the keen lieutenant's watchmen. With a pair of good farm-horses, and a farm-lad on the ridge of the load, and a heavy fellow whistling not too loudly on the lade-rail, this harmless car of fictitious Bacchus, crowned by effete Ceres, wended its rustic way towards the lowest bridge of Otter, a classic and idyllic stream. These two men, of pastoral strain and richest breadth of language, carried orders of a simplicity almost equal to their own.

No sooner was this waggon lost to sight and hearing in the thick October night, and the spies sped away by the short cuts to report it, than a long light cart, with a strong outstepping horse, came down the wooded valley

to the ghostly court. In half an hour, it was packed, and started inland, passing the birth-place of a very great man, straight away to Farrington and Rockbear, with orders to put up at Clist Hidon before daylight, where lived a farmer who would harbour them securely. On the following night they were to make their way, after shunning Cullompton, to the shelter in Blackmarsh, where they would be safe from all intrusion, and might await fresh instructions, which would take them probably towards Bridgwater, and Bristol. By friendly ministrations of the Whetstone men, who had some experience in trade of this description, all this was managed with the best success: Jem Kettel knew the country roads, by dark as well as daylight, and Harvey Tremlett was not a man to be collared very easily. In fact, without that sad mishap to their very willing and active nag, they might have fared through Perlycross, as they had through other villages, where people wooed the early pillow, without a trace or dream of any secret treasure passing.

Meanwhile at Sidmouth the clever Scotchman was enjoying his own acuteness. He allowed that slowly rolling waggon of the Eleusine dame to proceed some miles upon its course, before his men stood at the horses' heads.

There was wisdom in this, as well as pleasure—the joy a cat prolongs with mouse—inasmuch as all these good things were approaching his own den of spoil. When the Scotchmen challenged the Devonshire swains, with flourish of iron, and of language even harder, an interpreter was sorely needed. Not a word could the Northmen understand that came from the broad soft Southron tongues; while the Devonshire men feigning, as they were bidden, to take them for highwaymen, feigned also not to know a syllable of what they said.

This led, as it was meant to do, to very lavish waste of time, and increment of trouble. The carters, instead of lending hand for the unloading of their waggon, sadly delayed that operation, by shouting out “thaves!” at the top of their voice, tickling their horses into a wild start now and then, and rolling the Preventive men off at the tail. MacSpudder himself had a narrow escape; for just when he chanced to be between two wheels, both of them set off, without a word of notice; and if he had possessed at all a western body, it would have been run over. Being made of corkscrew metal by hereditary right, he wriggled out as sound as ever; and looked forward all the more to the solace underlying

this reluctant pile, as dry as any of his own components.

Nothing but his own grunts can properly express the fattening of his self-esteem (the whole of which was home-fed) when his men, without a fork—for the Boreal mind had never thought of that—but with a great many chops of knuckles (for the skin of straw is tougher than a Scotchman's) found their way at midnight, like a puzzled troop of divers, into the reef at bottom of the sheafy billows. Their throats were in a husky state, from chaff too penetrative, and barn-dust over volatile, and they risked their pulmonary weal, by opening a too sanguine cheer.

“Duty compels us to test the staple;” the Officer in command decreed; and many mouths gaped round the glow of his bullseye. “Don't 'ee titch none of that their wassh!” The benevolent Devonians exclaimed in vain. Want of faith prevailed; every man suspected the verdict of his predecessor, and even his own at first swallow. If timber-leg'd Dick could have timed the issue, what a landing he might have made! For the Coast-guard tested staple so that twenty miles of coast were left free for fifty hours.

Having told these things in his gravest

manner, Herniman, who so well combined the arts of peace and war, filled another pipe, and was open to enquiry. Everybody accepted his narrative with pleasure, and heartily wished him another such a chance of directing fair merchandise along the lanes of luck. The blacksmith alone had some qualms of conscience, for apparent back-slidings from the true faith of free-trade. But they clapped him on the back, and he promised with a gulp, that he never would peep into a Liberal Van again.

“There is one thing not quite clear to me;” said the Hopper, when the man of iron was settled below the table, whereas the youth had kept himself in trim for steeple-chasing. “What could our friend have seen in that vehicle of free-trade, to make him give that horrible account of its contents? And again, why did Mr. Harvey Tremlett carry off that tool of his, which I found in the water?”

With a wave of his hand—for his tongue had now lost, by one of nature’s finest arrangements, the exuberance of the morning, whereas a man of sober silence would now have gushed into bright eloquence—the chairman deputed to Herniman, and Tremlett, the honour of replying to the Hopper.

“ You see, sir,” said the former, “ it was just like this. We was hurried so in stowing cargo, that some of the finest laces in the world, such as they calls *Valentines*, worth maybe fifty or a hundred pounds a yard, was shot into the hold anyhow, among a lot of silks and so on. Harvey, and Jemmy, was on honour to deliver goods as they received them; blacksmith seed some of this lace a’flappin’ under black tarporly; and he knowed as your poor Squire had been figged out for ’s last voyage with same sort of stuff, only not so good. A clever old ’ooman maketh some, to Perlycrass; Honiton lace they calls it here. What could a’ think but that Squire was there? Reckon Master Crang would a’ told ’e this, if so be a’ hadn’t had a little drap too much.”

“ Thou bee’st a liar. Han’t had half enough, I tell ’e.” The blacksmith from under the table replied, and then rolled away into a bellowsful of snores.

“ To be sure!” said Peckover. “ I see now Tamsin Tamlin’s work it was. Sergeant Jakes told me all about it. With all the talk there had been of robbing graves, and two men keeping in the dark so, no wonder Crang thought what he did. Many people went to see that lace, I heard; and they said it was

too good to go underground; though nothing could be too good for the Squire. Well now, about that other thing—why did Mr. Tremlett make off with *little Billy*?”

“Can’t tell ’e, sir, very much about ’un;” the wrestler answered, with a laugh at the boy’s examination. “Happen I tuk ’un up, a’veelin’ of ’un, to frighten blacksmith maybe; and then I vancied a’ maight come handy like, if nag’s foot went wrong again. Then when nag gooed on all right, I just chucked ’un into a pool of watter, for to kape ’un out o’ sight of twisty volk. Ort more to zatisfy this young gent?”

“Yes. I am a twisty folk, I suppose. Unless there is any objection, I should like very much to know why Dr. Fox was sent on that fool’s errand to the pits.”

“Oh, I can tell ’e that, sir,” replied Jem Kettel, for the spirit of the lad, and his interest in their doings, had made him a favourite with the present company. “It were one of my mates as took too much trouble. He were appointed to meet us at the cornder of the four roads, an hour afore that or more; and he got in a bit of a skew, it seems, not knowing why we was so behindhand. But he knowed Dr. Vox, and thought ’un better out o’ way, being

such a sharp chap, and likely to turn meddlesome. He didn't want 'un to hang about up street, as a' maight with some sick 'ooman, and so he zent un' t'other road, to tend a little haxident. Wouldn't do he no harm, a' thought, and might zave us some bother. But, Lord! if us could have only knowed the toorn your volk would putt on it, I reckon us should have roared and roared, all droo the strates of Perlycrass. Vainest joke as ever coom to my hearin', or ever wull, however long the Lord kapeth me a'livin'. And to think of Jem Kettel being sworn to for a learned Doctor! Never had no teethache I han't, since the day I heered on it." A hearty laugh was hell to be a sovereign cure for toothache then, and perhaps would be so still, if the patient could accomplish it.

"Well, so far as that goes, you have certainly got the laugh of us;" Master Peckover admitted, not forgetting that he himself came in for as much as any one. "But come now, as you are so sharp, just give me your good opinion. And you being all along the roads that night, ought to have seen something. Who were the real people in that horrid business?"

"The Lord in heaven knoweth, sir;" said Tremlett very solemnly. "Us passed in front

of Perlycrass church, about dree o'clock of the morning. Nort were doing then, or us could scarcely have helped hearing of it. Even if 'em heered our wheels, and so got out of sight, I reckon, us must a' seed the earth-heap, though moon were gone a good bit afore that. And zim'th there waz no harse anywhere anigh. A harse will sing out a'most always to another harse at night, when a' heareth of him coming, and a' standeth lonely. Us coom athert ne'er chlick nor cheeld from Perlycrass to Black-marsh. As to us and Clam-pit volk, zoonder would us goo to gallows than have ort to say to grave-work. And gallows be too good for 'un, accardin' my opinion. But gen'lemen, afore us parts, I wants to drink the good health of the best man I've a knowed on airth. Bain't saying much perhaps, for my ways hath been crooked like. But maketh any kearless chap belave in good above 'un, when a hap'th across a man as thinketh nort of his own zell, but gi'eth his life to other volk. God bless Passon Penniloe ! ”

CHAPTER IX.

NEEDFUL RETURNS.

Now it happened that none of these people, thus rejoicing in the liberty of the subject, had heard of the very sad state of things, mainly caused by their own acts, and now prevailing at Old Barn. Tremlett knew that he had struck a vicious blow, at the head of a man who had grappled him, but he thought he had missed it and struck something else, a bag, or a hat, or he knew not what, in the pell mell scuffle and the darkness. His turn of mind did not incline him to be by any means particular as to his conduct, in a hot and hard personal encounter; but knowing his vast strength he generally abstained from the use of heavy weapons, while his temper was his own. But in this hot struggle, he had met with a mutually shattering blow from a staff, as straight as need be upon his right-hand knuckles; and the pain from this, coupled with the wrath

aroused at the access of volunteer enemies, had carried him—like the raging elements outside—out of all remembrance of the true “sacredness of humanity.” He struck out, with a sense of not doing the right thing, which is always strengthened afterwards; and his better stars being ablink in the gale, and the other man’s gone into the milky way, he hit him too hard; which is a not uncommon error.

Many might have reasoned (and before all others, Harvey Tremlett’s wife, if still within this world of reason; and a bad job it was for him that she was now outside it) that nothing could be nobler, taking people as we find them—and how else can we get the time to take them?—than the behaviour of this champion wrestler. But, without going into such sweet logic of affinity, and rhetoric of friends (whose minds have been made up in front of it) there was this crushing fact to meet, that an innocent man’s better arm was in a smash.

No milder word, however medical, is fit to apply to Frank Gilham’s poor fore-arm. They might call it the *ulna*—for a bit of Latin is a solace, to the man who feels the pain in a brother Christian’s member—and they might enter nobly into fine nerves of anatomy; but the one-sided difficulty still was there—they

had got to talk about it; he had got to bear it.

Not that he made any coward outcry of it. A truer test of manliness (as has been often said, by those who have been through either trial), truer than the rush of blood and reckless dash of battle, is the calm, open-eyed, and firm-fibred endurance of long, ever-grinding, never-graduating pain. The pain that has no pang, or paroxysm, no generosity to make one cry out "Well done!" to it, and be thankful to the Lord that it must have done its worst; but a fluid that keeps up a slow boil, by day and night, and never lifts the pot-lid, and never whirls about, but keeps up a steady stew of flesh, and bone, and marrow.

"I fear there is nothing for it, but to have it off," Dr. Gronow said, upon the third day of this frightful anguish. He had scarcely left the patient for an hour at a time; and if he had done harsh things in his better days, no one would believe it of him, who could see him now. "It was my advice at first, you know; but you would not have it, Jemmy. You are more of a surgeon than I am. But I doubt whether you should risk his life, like this."

"I am still in hopes of saving it. But you see how little I can do," replied Fox, whose

voice was very low, for he was suffering still from that terrible concussion, and but for the urgency of Gilham's case, he would now have been doctoring the one who pays the worst for it. "If I had my proper touch, and strength of nerve, I never should have let it come to this. There is a vile bit of splinter that won't come in, and I am not firm enough to make it. I wish I had left it to you, as you offered. After all, you know much more than we do."

"No, my dear boy. It is your special line. Such a case as Lady Waldron's I might be more at home with. I should have had the arm off long ago. But the mother—the mother is such a piteous creature! What has become of all my nerve? I am quite convinced that fly-fishing makes a man too gentle. I cannot stand half the things I once thought nothing of. By-the-by, couldn't you counteract her? You know the old proverb—

‘One woman rules the men;
Two makes them think again.’

It would be the best thing you could do."

"I don't see exactly what you mean," answered Jemmy, who had lost nearly all of his sprightliness.

"Plainer than a pikestaff. Send for your sister. You owe it to yourself, and her; and

most of all to the man who has placed his life in peril, to save yours. It is not a time to be too finical."

"I have thought of it once or twice. She would be of the greatest service now. But I don't much like to ask her. Most likely she would refuse to come, after the way in which I packed her off."

"My dear young friend," said Dr. Gronow, looking at him steadfastly, "if that is all you have to say, you don't deserve a wife at all worthy of the name. In the first place, you won't sink your own little pride; and in the next, you have no idea what a woman is."

"Young Farrant is the most obliging fellow in the world," replied Fox, after thinking for a minute. "I will put him on my young mare *Perle*, who knows the way; and he'll be at Foxden before dark. If Chris likes to come, she can be here well enough, by twelve or one o'clock to-morrow."

"Like, or no like, I'll answer for her coming; and I'll answer for her not being very long about it," said the senior doctor; and on both points he was right.

Christie was not like herself, when she arrived, but pale, and timid, and trembling. Her brother had not mentioned Frank in his

letter, doubting the turn she might take about it, and preferring that she should come to see to himself, which was her foremost duty. But young Mr. Farrant, the Churchwarden's son, and pretty Minnie's brother, had no embargo laid upon his tongue; and had there been fifty, what could they have availed to debar such a clever young lady? She had cried herself to sleep, when she knew all, and dreamed it a thousand times worse than it was.

Now she stood in the porch of the Old Barn, striving, and sternly determined to show herself rational, true to relationship, sisterly, and nothing more. But her white lips, quick breath, and quivering eyelids, were not altogether consistent with that. Instead of amazement, when Mrs. Gilham came to meet her, and no Jemmy, she did not even feign to be surprised, but fell into the bell-sleeves (which were fine things for embracing) and let the deep throbs of her heart disclose a tale that is better felt than told.

"My dearie," said the mother, as she laid the damask cheek against the wrinkled one, and stroked the bright hair with the palm of her hand, "don't 'e give way, that's a darling child. It will all be so different now you are come. It was what I was longing for, day and

night, but could not bring myself to ask. And I felt so sure in my heart, my dear, how sorry you would be for him."

"I should think so. I can't tell you. And all done for Jemmy, who was so ungrateful! My brother would be dead, if your son was like him. There has never been anything half so noble, in all the history of the world."

"My dear, you say that, because you think well of our Frankie—I have not called him that, since Tuesday now. But you do think well of him, don't you now?"

"Don't talk to me of thinking well indeed! I never can endure those weak expressions. When I like people, I do like them."

"My dear, it reminds me quite of our own country, to hear you speak out so hearty. None of them do it up your way, much; according to what I hear of them. I feel it so kind of you, to like Frank Gilham."

"Well! am I never to be understood? Is there no meaning in the English language? I don't like him only. But with all my heart, I love him."

"He won't care if doctors cut his arm off now, if he hath one left to go round you."

The mother sobbed a little, with second fiddle in full view; but being still a mother, wiped

her eyes, and smiled with content at the inevitable thing.

“One thing remember,” said the girl, with a coaxing domestic smile, and yet a lot of sparkle in her eyes; “if you ever tell him what you twisted out of me, in a manner which I may call—well, too circumstantial—I am afraid that I never should forgive you. I am awfully proud, and I can be tremendous. Perhaps he would not even care to hear it. And then what would become of me? Can you tell me that?”

“My dear, you know better. You know, as well as I do, that ever since he saw you, he has thought of nothing else. It has made me feel ashamed, that I should have a son capable of throwing over all the world beside——”

“But don’t you see, that is the very thing I like? Noble as he is, if it were not for that, I—well, I won’t go into it; but you ought to understand. He can’t think half so much of me, as I do of him.”

“Then there is a pair of you. And the Lord has made you so. But never fear, my pretty. Not a whisper shall he have. You shall tell him all about it, with your own sweet lips.”

“As if I could do that indeed! Why, Mrs.

Gillham, was that what you used to do, when you were young? I thought people were ever so much more particular in those days."

"I can hardly tell, my dear. Sometimes I quite forget, because it seems so long ago; and at other times I'm not fit to describe it, because I am doing it over again. But for pretty behaviour, and nice ways—nice people have them in every generation; and you may take place with the best of them. But we are talking, as if nothing was the matter. And you have never asked even how we are going on!"

"Because I know all about it, from the best authority. Coming up the hill we met Dr. Gronow, and I stopped the chaise to have a talk with him. He does not think the arm will ever be much good again; but he leaves it to younger men, to be certain about anything. That was meant for Jemmy, I suppose. He would rather have the pain, than not, he says; meaning of course in the patient—not himself. It shows healthy action—though I can't see how—and just the proper quantity of inflammation, which I should have thought couldn't be too little. He has come round to Jemmy's opinion this morning, that if one—something or other—can be got to stay in its place, and not do something or other—the poor arm may be

saved, after all; though never as strong as it was before. He says it must have been a frightful blow. I hope that man will be punished for it heavily."

"I hope so too, with all my heart; though I am not revengeful. Mr. Penniloe was up here yesterday, and he tried to make the best of it. I was so vexed that I told him, he would not be quite such a Christian about it perhaps, if he had the pain in his own arm. But he has made the man promise to give himself up, if your brother, or my son, require it. I was for putting him in jail at once, but the others think it better to wait a bit. But as for his promise, I wouldn't give much for that. However, men manage those things, and not women. Did the doctor say whether you might see my Frankie?"

"He said I might see Jemmy; though Jemmy is very queer. But as for Frank, if I saw him through a chink in the wall, that would be quite enough. But he must not see me, unless it was with a telescope through a two-inch door. That annoyed me rather. As if we were such babies! But he said that you were a most sensible woman, and that was the advice you gave him."

"What a story! Oh my dear, never marry

a doctor—though I hope you will never have the chance—but they really don't seem to care what they say. It was just the same in my dear husband's time. Dr. Gronow said to me—'if she comes when I am out, don't let her go near either of them. She might do a lot of mischief. She might get up an argument, or something.' And so, I said——”

“Oh, Mrs. Gilham, that is a great deal worse than telling almost any story. An argument! Do I ever argue? I had better have stayed away, if that is the way they think of me. A telescope, and a two-inch door, and not be allowed perhaps to open my mouth! There is something exceedingly unjust in the opinions men entertain of women.”

“Not my Frank, my dear. That is where he differs from all the other young men in the world. He has the most correct and yet exalted views; such as poets had, when there were any. If you could only hear him going on about you, before he got that wicked knock I mean, of course,—his opinions not only of your hair and face, nor even your eyes, though all perfectly true, but your mind, and your intellect, and disposition, and power of perceiving what people are, and then your conversation—almost too good for us, because of want of exercise—

and then, well I really forget what came next."

"Oh, Mrs. Gilham, it is all so absurd! How could he talk such nonsense? I don't like to hear of such things; and I cannot believe there could be anything, to come next."

"Oh yes, there was, my dear, now you remind me of it. It was about the small size of your ears, and the lovely curves inside them. He had found out in some ancient work,—for I believe he could hold his own in Greek and Latin, even with Mr. Penniloe,—that a well-shaped ear is one of the rarest of all feminine perfections. That made him think no doubt of yours, for men are quite babies when they are in love; and he found yours according to the highest standard. Men seem to make all those rules about us, simply according to their own ideas! What rules do we ever make about them?"

"I am so glad that you look at things in that way," Christie answered, with her fingers going slyly up her hair, to let her ears know what was thought of them; "because I was afraid that you were too much—well perhaps that thinking so much of your son, you might look at things one-sidedly. And yet I might have known from your unusual common sense

—but I do believe Dr. Gronow is coming back ; and I have not even got my cloak off ! Wait a bit, till things come round a little. A telescope, and a two-inch door ! One had better go about in a coal-sack, and curl-papers. Not that I ever want such things,—curves enough in my ears perhaps. But really I must make myself a little decent. They have taken my things up to my old room, I suppose. Try to keep him here, till I come back. He says that I get up arguments. Let me get up one with him.”

“ My orders are as stern as they are sensible ; ” Dr. Gronow declared, when she had returned, beautifully dressed and charming, and had thus attacked him with even more of blandishment than argument ; “ Your brother you may see, but not to talk much at one time to him ; for his head is in a peculiar state, and he does much more than he ought to do. He insists upon doing everything, which means perpetual attention to his friend. But he does it all as if by instinct, apparently without knowing it ; and that he should do it all to perfection, is a very noble proof of the thoroughness of his grounding. The old school, the old school of training—there is nothing like it after all. Any mere sciolist, any empiric, any smatterer

of the new medical course—and where would Frank Gilham's arm be now? Not in a state of lenitive pain, sanative, and in some degree encouraging, but in a condition of incipient mortification. For this is a case of compound comminuted fracture; so severe that my own conviction was—however no more of that to you two ladies. Only feel assured that no more could be done for the patient in the best hospital in London. And talking of upstart schools indeed, and new-fangled education, have you heard what the boys have done at Perlycross? I heard the noise upstairs, and I was obliged to shut the window, although it is such a soft spring-day. I was going down the hill to stop it, when I met Miss Fox. It is one of the most extraordinary jokes I ever knew."

"Oh, do tell us. We have not heard a word about it. But I am beginning to think that this is not at all a common place. I am never surprised at anything that happens at Perlycross." This was not a loyal speech on the part of the fair Christie.

"From what I have heard of that Moral Force-man," Mrs. Gilham remarked, with slow shake of her head; "I fear that his system would work better in a future existence, than as we are now. From what my son told me,

before his accident. I foresaw that it must lead up to something quite outrageous. Nothing ever answers long, that goes against all the wisdom of our ancestors."

"Excuse me for a minute; I must first see how things are going on upstairs. As soon as I am at liberty, I will tell you what I saw. Though I like the march of intellect, when discipline directs it."

Dr. Gronow, who was smiling, which he seldom was, except after whirling out a two-ounce trout, went gently upstairs, and returned in a few minutes, and sat down to tell his little tale.

"Every thing there going on as well as can be. Your brother is delighted to hear that you are come. But the other patient must not hear a word about it yet. We don't want any rapid action of the heart. Well, what the young scamps have done is just this. The new schoolmaster has abolished canes, you know, and birches, and every kind of physical compulsion. He exclaims against coercion, and pronounces that boys are to be guided by their hearts, instead of being governed by their—pardon me, a word not acknowledged in the language of these loftier days. This gentleman seems to have abolished the old system of

the puerile body and mind, without putting anything of cogency in its place. He has introduced novelties, very excellent no doubt, if the boys would only take to them, with intellects as lofty as his own. But that is the very thing the boys won't do. I am a Liberal—so far as feelings go, when not overpowered by the judgment—but I must acknowledge that the best extremes of life, the boyhood made of nature, and the age made of experience, are equally staunch in their Toryism. But this man's great word is—Reform. As long as the boys thought it meant their benches, and expected to have soft cushions on them, they were highly pleased, and looked forward to this tribute to a part which had hitherto been anything but sacred. Their mothers too encouraged it, on account of wear and tear; but their fathers could not see why they should sit softer at their books, than they had to do at their trenchers.

“But yesterday unluckily the whole of it came out. There arrived a great package, by old Hill the carrier, who has had his van mended that was blown over, and out rushed the boys, without asking any leave, to bring in their comfortable cushions. All they found was a great black-board, swinging on a pillar,

with a socket at the back, and a staple and chain to adjust it. Toogood expected them to be in raptures, but instead of that they all went into sulks; and the little fellows would not look at it, having heard of black magic and witchcraft. Toogood called it a 'Demonstration-table, for the exhibition of Object-lessons.'

"Mr. Penniloe, as you may suppose, had long been annoyed and unhappy about the new man's doings, but he is not supreme in the week-day school, as he is on Sunday; and he tried to make the best of it, till the right man should come home. And I cannot believe that he went away on purpose to-day, in order to let them have it out. But the boys found out that he was going, and there is nobody else they care twopence for.

"Everybody says, except their mothers, that they must have put their heads together overnight, or how could they have acted with such unity and precision? Not only in design but in execution, the accomplished tactician stands confessed. Instead of attacking the enemy at once, when many might have hastened to his rescue, they deferred operations until to-day, and even then waited for the proper moment. They allowed him to exhaust all the best of his breath in his usual frothy oration—for like

most of such men he can spout for ever, and finds it much easier than careful teaching.

“Then as he leaned back, with pantings in his chest, and eyes turned up at his own eloquence, two of the biggest boys flung a piece of clothes-line round his arms from behind, and knotted it, while another slipped under the desk, and buckled his ankles together with a satchel-strap, before he knew what he was doing. Then as he began to shout and bellow, scarcely yet believing it, they with much panting and blowing, protrusion of tongues, and grunts of exertion, some working at his legs, and some shouldering at his loins, and others hauling on the clothes-line, but all with perfect harmony of action, fetched their preceptor to the Demonstration-board, and laying him with his back flat against it, strapped his feet to the pedestal; then pulling out the staple till the board was perpendicular, they secured his coat-collar to the shaft above it, and there he was—as upright as need be, but without the power to move, except at his own momentous peril. Then to make quite sure of him, a clever little fellow got upon a stool, and drew back his hair, bright red, and worn long like a woman’s, and tied it with a book-tape behind the pillar. You may

imagine how the poor preceptor looks. Any effort of his to release himself will crush him beneath the great Demonstration, like a mouse in a figure-of-four trap."

"But are we to believe, Dr. Gronow," asked Christie; "that you came away, and left the poor man in that helpless state?"

"Undoubtedly I did. It is no concern of mine. And the boys had only just got their pea-shooters. He has not had half enough to cure him yet. Besides, they had my promise; for the boys have got the keys, they are charging a penny for a view of this Reformer; but they won't let any one in without a promise of strict neutrality. I gave a shilling, for I am sure they have deserved it. Somebody will be sure to cast him loose, in plenty of time for his own good. This will be of the greatest service to him, and cure him for a long time of big words."

"But suppose he falls forward upon his face, and the board falls upon him and suffocates him. Why, it would be the death of Mr. Penniloe. You are wanted here of course, Dr. Gronow; but I shall put my bonnet on, and rush down the hill, to the release of the Higher Education."

"Don't rush too fast, Miss Fox. There's a

tree blown down across the lane, after you turn out of the one you came by. We ought to have had it cleared, but they say it will take a fortnight to make some of the main roads passable again. I would not go, if I were you. Somebody will have set him free, before you get there. I'll go out and listen. With the wind in the north, we can hear their hurrah-ing quite plainly at the gate. You can come with me, if you like."

"Oh, it is no hurrah-ing, Dr. Gronow! How can you deceive me so? It is a very sad sound indeed;" said Christie, as they stood at the gate, and she held her pretty palms to serve as funnels for her much admired ears. "It sounds like a heap of boys weeping and wailing. I fear that something sadly vindictive has been done. One never can have a bit of triumph, without that."

She scarcely knew the full truth of her own words. It was indeed an epoch of Nemesis. This fourth generation of boys in that village are beginning to be told of it, on knees that shake, with time, as well as memory. And thus it befell.

"What, lock me out of my own school-door! Can't come in, without I pay a penny! May do in Spain; but won't do here."

A strong foot was thrust into the double of the door, a rattle of the handle ran up the lock and timber, and conscience made a coward of the boy that took the pennies. An Odic Force, as the present quaky period calls it, permeated doubtless from the Master hand. Back went the boy, and across him strode a man, rather tall, wiry, torve of aspect, hyporrhined with a terse moustache, hatted with a vast sombrero. At a glance he had the whole situation in his eye, and his heart,—worst of all, in his strong right arm. He flung off a martial cloak, that might have cumbered action, stood at the end of the long desk, squared his shoulders and eyebrows, and shouted—

“Boys, here’s a noise!”

As this famous battle-cry rang through the room, every mother’s darling knew what was coming. Consternation is too weak a word. Grinning mouths fell into graves of terror, castaway pea-shooters quivered on the floor, fat legs rattled in their boots, and flew about, helter-skelter, anywhere, to save their dear foundations. Vain it was; no vanishing point could be discovered. Wisdom was come, to be justified of her children.

The schoolmaster of the ancient school marched with a grim smile to the door, locked

it, and pocketed the key. Three little fellows, untaught as yet the expediency of letting well alone, had taken the bunch of keys, and brought forth, and were riding disdainfully the three canes dormant under the new dispensation. "Bring me those implements," commanded Sergeant Jakes, "perhaps they may do—to begin with." He arranged them lovingly, and then spoke wisely.

"My dear young friends, it is very sad to find, that while I have been in foreign parts, you have not been studying discipline. The gentleman, whom you have treated thus, will join me, I trust, by the time I have done, in maintaining that I do not bear the rod in vain. Any boy who crawls under a desk may feel assured that he will get it ten times worse."

Pity draws a mourning veil, though she keeps a place to peep through, when her highly respected cousin, Justice, is thus compelled to assert herself. Enough that very few indeed of the highly cultured boys of Perlycross showed much aptitude that week for sedentary employment.

CHAPTER X.

HOME AND FOREIGN.

SIX weeks was the average time allowed for the voyage to and fro of the schooner *Montilla* (owned by Messrs. Besley of Exeter) from Topsham to Cadiz, or wherever it might be; and little uneasiness was ever felt, if her absence extended to even three months. For Spaniards are not in the awkward habit of cracking whips at old Time, when he is out at grass, much less of jumping at his forelock; and Iberian time is nearly always out at grass. When a thing will not help to do itself to-day, who knows that it may not be in a kinder mood to-morrow? The spirit of worry, and unreasonable hurry, is a deadly blast to all serenity of mind and dignity of demeanour, and can be in harmony with nothing but bad weather. Thus the *Montilla's* period was a fluctuating numeral.

As yet English produce was of high repute,

and the Continent had not been barb-wired by ourselves, against our fleecy merchandise. The Spaniards happened to be in the vein for working, and thus on this winter trip the good trader's hold was quickly cleared of English solids, and refilled with Spanish fluids; and so the *Montilla* was ready for voyage homeward the very day her passenger rejoined. This pleased him well, for he was anxious to get back, though not at all aware of the urgent need arising. Luckily for him and for all on board, the schooner lost a day in getting out to sea, and thus ran into the rough fringes only of the great storm that swept the English coast and channel. In fact she made good weather across the Bay of Biscay, and swang into her berth at Topsham, several days before she was counted due.

The Sergeant's first duty was, of course, to report himself at Walderscourt; and this he had done, before he made that auspicious re-entry upon his own domain. The ladies did not at all expect to see him, for days or even for weeks to come, having heard nothing whatever of his doings; for the post beyond France was so uncertain then, that he went away with orders not to write.

When Jakes was shown into the room, Lady

Waldron was sitting alone, and much agitated by a letter just received from Mr. Webber, containing his opinion of all that had happened at Perlton on Wednesday. Feeling her unfitness for another trial, she sent for her daughter, before permitting the envoy to relate his news. Then she strove to look calmly at him, and to maintain her cold dignity as of yore; but the power was no longer in her. Months of miserable suspense, perpetual brooding, and want of sleep, had lowered the standard of her pride; and nothing but a burst of painful sobs saved her from a worse condition.

The Sergeant stood hesitating by the door, feeling that he had no invitation to see this, and not presuming to offer comfort. But Miss Waldron seeing the best thing to do, called him and bade him tell his news in brief.

“May it please your ladyship,” the veteran began, staring deeply into his new Spanish hat, about which he had received some compliments; “all I have to tell your ladyship is for the honour of the family. Your ladyship’s brother is as innocent as I be. He hath had nought to do with any wicked doings here. He hath not got his money, but he means to have it.”

“Thank God!” cried Lady Waldron, but whether about the money, or the innocence, was not clear; and then she turned away, to have things out with herself; and Jakes was sent into the next room, and sat down, thanking the crown of his hat that it covered the whole of his domestic interests.

When feminine excitement was in some degree spent, and the love of particulars (which can never long be quenched by any depth of tears), was reviving, Sergeant Jakes was well received, and told his adventures like a veteran. A young man is apt to tell things hotly, as if nothing had ever come to pass before; but a steady-goer knows that the sun was shining, and the rain was raining, and the wind was blowing, ere he felt any one of them. Alike the whole must be cut short.

It appears that the Sergeant had a fine voyage out, and picked up a good deal of his lapsed Spanish lore, from two worthy Spanish hands among the crew. Besley of Exeter did things well—as the manner of that city is—victuals were good, and the crew right loyal, as generally happens in that case. Captain Binstock stood in awe of his elder brother, the butler, and never got out of his head its original belief that the Sergeant was his

brother's schoolmaster. Against that idea chronology strove hazily, and therefore vainly. The Sergeant strode the deck with a stick he bought at Exeter, spoke of his experience in transports, regarded the masts as a pair of his own canes—in a word was master of the ship, whenever there was nothing to be done to her. A finer time he never had, for he was much too wiry to be sea-sick. All the crew liked him, whether present or absent, and never laughed at him but in the latter case. He corrected their English, when it did not suit his own, and thus created a new form of discipline. Most of this he recounted in his pungent manner, without a word of self-laudation; and it would have been a treat to Christie Fox to hear him; but his present listeners were too anxious about the result to enjoy this part of it.

Then he went to the city to which he was despatched, and presented his letters to the few he could find entitled to receive them. The greater part were gone beyond the world of letters, for twenty-five years make a sad gap in the post. And of the three survivors, one alone cared to be troubled with the bygone days. But that one was a host in himself, a loyal retainer of the ancient family, in the time

of its grandeur, and now in possession of a sinecure post, as well as a nice farm on the hills, both of which he had obtained through their influence. He was delighted to hear once more of the beautiful lady he had formerly adored. He received the Sergeant as his guest, and told him all that was known of the present state of things, concerning the young Count—as he still called him—and all that was likely to come of it.

It was true that the Count had urged his claim, and brought evidence in support of it; but at present there seemed to be very little chance of his getting the money for years to come, even if he should do so in the end; and for that he must display, as they said, fresh powers of survivorship. He had been advised to make an offer of release and quit-claim, upon receipt of the sum originally advanced without any interest; but he had answered sternly, “either I will have all, or none.”

The amount was so large, that he could not expect to receive the whole immediately; and he was ready to accept it by instalments; but the authorities would not pay a penny, nor attempt an arrangement with him, for fear of admitting their liability. In a very brief, and candid, but by no means honest manner, they

refused to be bound at all by the action of their fathers. When that was of no avail, because the City-tolls were in the bond, they began to call for proof of this, and evidence of that, and set up every possible legal obstacle, hoping to exhaust the claimant's sadly dwindled revenues. Above all, they maintained that two of the lives in the assurance-deed were still subsisting, although their lapse was admitted in their own minutes, and registered in the record. And it was believed that in this behalf, they were having recourse to personation.

That scandalous pretext must be demolished, before it could become of prime moment to the Count to prove the decease of his brother-in-law; and certain it was that no such dramatic incident had occurred in the City, as that which her ladyship had witnessed, by means of her imagination. With a long fight before him, and very scanty sinews of war to maintain it, the claimant had betaken himself to Madrid, where he had powerful friends, and might consult the best legal advisers. But his prospects were not encouraging; for unless he could deposit a good round sum, for expenses of process, and long enquiry, and even counter-bribing, no one was likely to take up his case, so strong and so tough were the forces in

possession. Rash friends went so far as to recommend him to take the bull by the horns at once, to lay forcible hands upon the City-tolls, without any order from a law-court, for the Deed was so drastic that this power was conferred; but he saw that to do this would simply be to play into the hands of the enemy. For thus he would probably find himself outlawed, or perhaps cast into prison, with the lapse of his own life imminent; for the family of the Barcas were no longer supreme in the land, as they used to be.

“Ungrateful thieves! Vile pigs of burghers!” Lady Waldron exclaimed with just indignation. “My grandfather would have strung them up with straw in their noses, and set them on fire. They sneer at the family of Barca, do they? It shall trample them under-foot. My poor brother shall have my last penny to punish them; for that I have wronged him in my heart. Ours is a noble race, and most candid. We never deign to stoop ourselves to mistrust or suspicion. I trust Master Sergeant, you have not spoken so to the worthy and loyal Diego, that my brother may ever hear of the thoughts introduced into my mind concerning him?”

“No, my lady, not a word. Everything I

did, or said, was friendly, straight-forward, and favourable to the honour of the family."

"You are a brave man; you are a faithful soldier. Forget that by the force of circumstances I was compelled to have such opinions. But can you recite to me the names of the two persons, whose lives they have replenished?"

"Yes, my lady. Señor Diego wrote them down in this book on purpose. He thought that your ladyship might know something of them."

"For one I have knowledge of everything; but the other I do not know," Lady Waldron said, after reading the names. "This poor Señorita was one of my bridesmaids, known to me from my childhood. *La Giralda* was her name of intimacy, what you call her nickname, by reason of her stature. Her death I can prove too well, and expose any imitation. But the Spanish nation—you like them much? You find them gentle, brave, amiable, sober, not as the English are, generous, patriotic, honourable?"

"Quite as noble and good, my lady, as we found them five and twenty years ago. And I hope that the noble Count will get his money. A bargain is a bargain—as we say here. And if they are so honourable——"

“Ah, that is quite a different thing. Inez, I must leave you. I desire some time to think. My mind is very much relieved of one part, although of another still more distressed. I request you to see to the good refreshment of this honourable and faithful soldier.”

Lady Waldron acknowledged the Sergeant's low bow, with a kind inclination of her Andalusian head (which is something in the head way among the foremost) and left the room with a lighter step than her heart had allowed her for many a week.

“This will never do, Sergeant; this won't do at all,” said Miss Waldron coming up to him, as soon as she had shut the door behind her lofty mother. “I know by your countenance, and the way you were standing, and the sideway you sit down again, that you have not told us everything. That is not the right way to go on, Sergeant Jakes.”

“Miss Nicie!” cried Jakes, with a forlorn hope of frightening her, for she had sat upon his knee, many a time, ten or twelve years ago, craving stories of good boys and bad boys. But now the eyes, which he used to fill with any emotion he chose to call for, could produce that effect upon his own.

“Can you think that I don't understand

you?" said Nicie, never releasing him from her eyes. "What was the good of telling me all those stories, when I was a little thing, except for me to understand you? When anybody tells me a story that is true, it is no good for him to try anything else. I get so accustomed to his way, that I catch him out in a moment."

"But my dear, my dear Miss Nicie," the Sergeant looked all about, as in large appeal, instead of fixing steady gaze; "if I have told you a single word that is not as true as Gospel—may I——"

"Now don't be profane, Sergeant Jakes. That was allowed perhaps in war-time. And don't be crooked—which is even worse. I never called in question any one thing you have said. All I know is that you have stopped short. You used to do just the same with me, when things I was too young to hear came in. You are easier to read than one of your own copies. What have you kept in the background, you unfaithful soldier?"

"Oh Miss, how you do remind me of the Colonel! Not that he ever looked half as fierce. But he used to say, 'Jakes what a deep rogue you are!' meaning how deeply he could trust me, against all his enemies.

But Miss, I have given my word about this."

"Then take it back, as some people do their presents. What is the good of being a deep rogue, if you can't be a shallow one? I should hope you would rather be a rogue, to other people than to me. I will never speak to you again, unless you show now that you can trust me, as my dear father used to trust in you. No secrets from me, if you please."

"Well, Miss, it was for your sake, more than anybody else's. But you must promise, honour bright, not to let her ladyship know of it; for it might be the death of her. It took me by surprise, and it hath almost knocked me over; for I never could have thought there was more troubles coming. But who do you think I ran up against, to Exeter?"

"How can I tell? Don't keep me waiting. That kind of riddle is so hateful always."

"Master Tom, Miss Nicie! Your brother, Master Tom! 'Sir Thomas Waldron' his proper name is now. You know they have got a new oil they call *gas*, to light the public places of the big towns with, and it makes everything as bright as day, and brighter than some of the days we get now. Well, I was intending to come on last night by the Bristol

mail, and wait about till you was up; and as I was standing with my knapsack on my shoulder, to see her come in from Plymouth, in she comes, and a tall young man dressed all in black, gets down slowly from the roof, and stands looking about very queerly.

“ ‘Bain’t you going no further, Sir?’ says the Guard to him very civil, as he locked the bags in; ‘only allows us three minutes and a half.’—for the young man seemed as if he did not care what time it was.

“ ‘No. I can’t go home;’ says he, as if nothing mattered to him. I was handing up my things, to get up myself, when the tone of his voice took me all of a heap.

“ ‘What, Master Tom!’ says I, going up to him.

“ ‘Who are you?’ says he. ‘Master Tom, indeed!’ For I had this queer sort of hat on, and cloak, like a blessed foreigner.

“ Well, when I told him who I was, he did not seem at all as he used to be, but as if I had done him a great injury; and as for his luggage, it would have gone on with the coach, if the Guard had not called out about it.

“ ‘Come in here;’ he says to me, as if I was a dog, him that was always so well-spoken and polite! And he turned sharp into *The Old*

London Inn, leaving all his luggage on the stones outside.

“‘Private sitting-room, and four candles!’ he called out, marching up the stairs, and making me a sign to follow him. Everybody seemed to know him there, and I told them to fetch his things in.

“‘No fire! Hot enough already. Put the candles down, and go;’ said he to the waiter, and then he locked the door, and threw the key upon the table. It takes a good deal to frighten me, Miss. But I assure you I was trembling; for I never saw such a pair of eyes—not furious, but so desperate; and I should have been but a baby in his hands, for he is bigger than even his father was. Then he pulled out a newspaper, and spread it among the candles.

“‘Now, you man of Perlycross,’ he cried, ‘you that teach the boys, who are going to be grave-robbers,—is this true, or is it all a cursed lie?’ Excuse me telling you, Miss, exactly as he said it. ‘The Lord in heaven help me, I think I shall go mad, unless you can tell me it is all a wicked lie.’ Up and down the room he walked, as if the boards would sink under him; while I was at my wits’ ends, as you may well suppose, Miss.

“‘I have never heard a word of any of this, Master Tom;’ I said, as soon as I had read it; for it was all about something that came on at Perliton before the Magistrates, last Wednesday. ‘I have been away in foreign parts.’

“Miss Nicie, he changed to me from that moment. I had not said a word about how long I was away, or anything whatever to deceive him. But he looked at my hat that was lying on a chair, and my cloak that was still on my back, as much as to say—‘I ought to have known it;’ and then he said, ‘Give me your hand, Old Jakes. I beg your pardon a thousand times. What a fool I must be, to think you would ever have allowed it!’

“This put me in a very awkward hole; for I was bound to acknowledge that I had been here, when the thing, he was so wild about, was done. But I let him go on, and have his raving out. For men are pretty much the same as boys; though expecting of their own way more, which I try to take out of the young ones. But a loud singing out, and a little bit of stamping, brings them into more sense of what they be.

“‘I landed at Plymouth this morning,’ he said, ‘after getting a letter, which had been

I don't know where, to tell me that my dear father, the best man that ever lived, was dead. I got leave immediately, and came home to comfort my mother and sister, and to attend to all that was needful. I went into the Coffee-room, before the coach was ready ; and taking up the papers, I find this ! They talk of it, as if it was a thing well known, a case of great interest in the county ; a *mystery* they call it, a very lively thing to talk about—*The great Perlycross Mystery*, in big letters, cried at every corner, made a fine joke of in every dirty pot-house. It seems to have been going on for months. Perhaps it has killed my mother and my sister. It would soon kill me, if I were there, and could do nothing.'

“ Here I found a sort of opening ; for the tears rolled down his face, as he thought of you, Miss Nicie, and your dear Mamma ; and the rage in his heart seemed to turn into grief, and he sat down in one of the trumpery chairs that they make nowadays, and it sprawled and squeaked under him, being such an uncommon fine young man in trouble. So I went up to him, and stood before him, and lifted his hands from his face, as I had done many's the time, when he was a little fellow, and broke his nose

perhaps in his bravery. And then he looked up at me quite mild, and said—

“‘I believe I am a brute, Jakes. But isn’t this enough to make me one?’

“I stayed with him all night, Miss; for he would not go to bed, and he wouldn’t have nothing for to eat or drink; and I was afraid to leave him so. But I got him at last to smoke a bit of my tobacco; and that seemed to make him look at things a little better. I told him all I knew, and what I had been to Spain for, and how you and her ladyship were trying bravely to bear the terrible will of the Lord; and then I coaxed him all I could, to come along of me, and help you to bear it. But he said—‘I might take him for a coward, if I chose; but come to Walderscourt he wouldn’t, and face his own mother and sister he couldn’t; until he had cleared off this terrible disgrace.’”

“He is frightfully obstinate, he always was;” said Nicie, who had listened to this tale, with streaming eyes: “but it would be such a comfort to us both, to have him here. What has become of him? Where is he now?”

“That is the very thing I dare not tell you, Miss; because he made me swear to keep it to myself. By good rights, I ought to have told

you nothing; but you managed so to work it out of me. I would not come away from him, till I knew where he would be, because he was in such a state of mind. But I softened him down a good bit, I believe; and he might take a turn, if you were to write, imploring of him. I will take care that he gets it, for he made me promise to write, and let him know exactly how I found things here, after being away so long. But he is that bitter against this place, that it will take a deal to bring him here. You must work on his love for his mother, Miss Nicie, and his pity for the both of you. That is the only thing that touches him. And say that it is no fault of Perlycross, but strangers altogether."

"You shall have my letter before the postman comes, so that you may send it with your own. What a good friend you have been to us, dear Jakes! My mother's heart would break at last, if she knew that Tom was in England, and would not come first of all to her. I can scarcely understand it. To me it seems so unnatural."

"Well, Miss, you never can tell by yourself, how other people will take things—not even your own brother. And I think he will soon come round, Miss Nicie. According to my

opinion, it was the first shock of the thing, and the way he got it, that drove him out of his mind a'most. Maybe, he judges you by himself, and fancies it would only make you worse, to see him, with this disgrace upon him. For that's what he can't get out of his head; and it would be a terrible meeting for my lady, with all the pride she hath in him. I reckon 'tis the Spanish blood that does it; Englishman as he is, all over. But never fear, Miss Nicie; we'll fetch him here, between the two of us, afore we are much older. He hath always been loving in his nature; and love will drive the anger out."

CHAPTER XI.

THE PRIDE OF LIFE.

HARVEY TREMLETT kept his promise not to leave the neighbourhood, until the result of the grievous injury done to Frank Gilham should be known. Another warrant against him might be issued for that fierce assault, and he had made up his mind to stand a trial, whatever result might come of it. What he feared most, and would have fled from, was a charge of running contraband goods, which might have destroyed a thriving trade, and sent him and his colleagues across the seas. Rough and savage as he became, (when his violent temper was provoked) and scornful of home-life and quiet labour—these and other far from exemplary traits, were mainly the result of his roving habits, and the coarse and lawless company into which he had ever fallen. And it tended little to his edification, that he exercised lordship over them, in virtue of superior strength.

But his nature was rather wild than brutal; in its depths were sparks and flashes of manly generosity, and even warmth of true affection for the few who had been kind to him, if they took him the right way of his stubborn grain. He loved his only daughter Zip, although ashamed of showing it: and he was very proud of his lineage, and the ancient name of Tremlett. Thus Mr. Penniloe had taken unawares the straightest road to his good will, by adopting the waif as an inmate of his house, and treating her, not as a servant, but a child. That Zip should be a lady, as the daughters of that Norman race had been for generations, was the main ambition of her father's life. He had seen no possibility of it; and here was almost a surety of it, unless she herself threw away the chance.

Rather a pretty scene was toward for those who are fond of humanity, at the ruined Tremlett mill, on the morning of Saint David's day. Harvey had taken to this retreat—and a very lonely home it was—for sundry good reasons of his own; the most important of which was not entrusted even to his daughter, or the revered and beloved Parson. This was to prepare a refuge, and a store house for Free-trade, more convenient, better placed,

larger, and much safer than the now notorious fastness of Blackmarsh. Here were old buildings, and mazy webs of wandering; soft cliff was handy, dark wood and rushing waters, tangled lanes, furzy corners, nooks of overhanging, depths of in-and-out hood-winks of nature, when she does not wish man to know everything about her. The solid firm, directed by Timber-leg'd Dick, were prepared to pay a fine price, as for a paper-mill, for this last feudal tenure of the Tremlett race.

But the last male member of that much discounted stock (or at any rate the last now producible in Court, without criminal procedure) had refused to consider the most liberal offers, even of a fine run of Free-trade, all to himself—as still it is—for the alienation in fee-simple of this last sod of hereditament. For good consideration, he would grant a lease, which Blickson might prepare for them; but he would be—something the nadir of benediction—if he didn't knock down any man, who would try to make him rob his daughter. The league of Free-traders came into his fine feelings, and took the mills and premises, on a good elastic lease. But the landlord must put them into suitable condition.

This he was doing now, with technical

experience, endeavouring at the same time to discharge some little of his new parental duties. Jem Kettel found it very hard, that though allowed to work, he was not encouraged (as he used to be) to participate in the higher moments. "You clear out, when my darter cometh. You be no fit company for she." Jem could not see it, for he knew how good he was.

But the big man had taken a much larger turn. He was not going to alter his own course of life. That was quite good enough for him; and really in those days people heard so much of "Reform! Reform!" dinged for ever in their ears, that any one at all inclined to think for himself had a tendency towards back-sliding. None the less, must he urge others to reform; as the manner has been of all ages.

Tremlett's present anxiety was to provide his daughter with good advice, and principles so exalted, that there might be no further peril of her becoming like himself. From him she was to learn the value of proper pride and dignity, of behaving in her new position, as if she had been born to it, of remembering distant forefathers, but forgetting her present father, at any rate as an example. To this end

he made her study the great ancestral Bible—not the Canonical books however, so much as the covers and fly-leaves—the wholly uninspired records of the Tremlett family. These she perused with eager eyes, thinking more highly of herself, and laying in large store of pride—a bitter stock to start with, even when the course of youth is fair.

But whether for evil or for good, it was pleasant to see the rough man sitting, this first day of the Spring-time, teaching his little daughter how sadly he and she had come down in the world. Zip had been spared from her regular lessons, by way of a treat, to dine with her father, before going—as was now arranged—to the care of a lady at Exeter. Jem Kettel had been obliged to dine upon inferior victuals, and at the less fashionable hour of eleven a.m. : for it was not to be known that he was there, lest attention should be drawn to the job they were about. Tremlett had washed himself very finely, in honour of this great occasion, and donned a new red woollen jacket, following every curve and chunk of his bulky chest and rugged arms. He had finished his dinner, and was in good spirits, with money enough from his wrestling-prize to last him until the next good run, and a pipe of choice tobacco

(such as could scarcely be got at Exeter), issuing soft rings of turquoise tint to the black oak beams above. The mill-wheel was gone; but the murmur of the brook, and the tinkle of the trickle from the shattered trough, and the singing of birds in their love-time came, like the waving of a branch that sends the sunshine in.

The dark-haired child was in the window-seat, with her Sunday frock on, and her tresses ribboned back, and her knees wide apart to make a lap for the Bible, upon which her great brown eyes were fixed. Puffs of the March wind now and then came in, where the lozenges of glass were gone, and lifted loose tussocks of her untrussed hair, and set the sunshine dancing on the worn planks of the floor. But the girl was used to breezes, and her heart was in her lesson.

“Hundreds of ’em, more than all the Kings and Queens of England!” she said, with her very clear voice trembling, and her pointed fingers making hop-scotch in and out the lines of genealogy. “What can Fay Penniloe show like that? But was any of ’em Colonels, father?”

“Maight a’ been, if ’em would a’ comed down to it. But there wasn’t no Colonels, in the

old times, I've a' heered. Us was afore that sort of thing were found out."

"To be sure. I might have knowed. But was any of 'em, Sirs, the same as Sir Thomas Waldron was?"

"Scores of 'em, when they chose to come down to it. But they kept that, most ways, for the younger boys among 'em. The father of the family was bound to be a Lord."

"Oh father! Real lords? And me to have never seed one! What hath become of the laws of the land? But why baint you a real lord, the same as they was?"

"Us never cared to keep it up;" said the last of the visible Tremletts, after pondering over this difficult point. "You see, Zip, it's only the women cares for that. 'Tis no more to a man, than the puff of this here pipe."

"But right is right, father. And it soundeth fine. Was any of them Earls, and Marquises, and Dukes, and whatever it is that comes over that?"

"They was everything they cared to be. Barons, and Counts, and Dukes, spelled the same as Ducks, and Holy Empires, and Holy Sepulkers. But do 'e, my dear, get my baccy box."

What summit of sovereignty they would have reached, if the lecture had proceeded, no one knows; for as Zip, like a Princess, was stepping in and out among the holes of the floor, with her father's tin box, the old door shook with a sharp and heavy knock; and the child with her face lit up by the glory of her birth, marched away to open it. This she accomplished with some trouble, for the timber was ponderous and rickety.

A tall young man strode in, as if the place belonged to him, and said, "I want to see Harvey Tremlett."

"Here be I. Who be you?"

The wrestler sat where he was, and did not even nod his head; for his rule was always to take people, just as they chose to take him. But the visitor cared little for his politeness, or his rudeness.

"I am Sir Thomas Waldron's son. If I came in upon you rudely, I am sorry for it. It is not what I often do. But just now I am not a bit like myself."

"Sir, I could take my oath of that; for your father was a gentleman. Zippy, dust a cheer, my dear."

"No, young lady, you shall not touch it," said the young man, with a long stride, and a

gentle bow to the comely child. "I am fitter to lift chairs than you are."

This pleased the father mightily; and he became quite gracious, when the young Sir Thomas said to him, while glancing with manifest surprise at his quick and intelligent daughter—

"Mr. Tremlett, I wish to speak to you, of a matter too sad to be talked about, in the presence of young ladies."

This was not said by way of flattery or conciliation; for Zip, with her proud step and steadfast gaze, was of a very different type from that of the common cottage-lass. She was already at the door, when her father said—

"Go you down to the brook, my dear, and see how many nestesses you can find. Then come back and say good-bye to Daddy, afore go home to Passonage. Must be back afore dark, you know."

"What a beautiful child!" Young Waldron had been looking with amazement at her. "I know what the Tremletts used to be; but I had no idea they could be like that. I never saw such eyes in all my life."

"Her be well enough," replied the father shortly. "And now, sir, what is it as I can do for you? I knows zumat of the troubles

on your mind; and if I can do 'e any good, I wull."

"Two things I want of you. First, your word of honour—and I know what you Tremletts have been in better days—that you had nothing to do with that cursed and devilish crime in our churchyard."

"Sir," answered Tremlett, standing up for the first time in this interview, "I give you my oath by that book yon'ner, that I knows nort about it. We be coon low; but us bain't zunk to that yet."

He met Sir Thomas Wallron, eye to eye, and the young man took his plastered hand, and knew that it was not a liar's.

"Next I want your good advice," said the visitor, sitting down by him; "and your help, if you will give it. I will not speak of money because I can see what you are. But first to follow it up, there must be money. Shall I tell you what I shall be glad to do, without risk of offending you? Very well; I don't care a fig for money, in a matter such as this. Money won't give you back your father, or your mother, or anybody, when they are gone away from you. But it may help you to do your duty to them. At present, I have no money to speak of; because I have been with

my regiment, and there it goes away, like smoke. But I can get any quantity almost, by going to our lawyers. If you like, and will see to it, I will put a thousand pounds in your hands, for you to be able to work things up; and another thousand, if you make anything of it. Don't be angry with me. I don't want to bribe you. It is only for the sake of doing right. I have seen a great deal of the world. Can you ever get what is right, without paying for it?"

"No, sir, you can't. And not always, if you do. But you be the right sort, and no mistake. Tell you what, Sir Thomas—I won't take a farden of your money, 'cos it would be a' robbin' of you. I han't got the brains for gooin' under other folk, like. Generally they does that to me. But I know an oncommon sharp young fellow, Jemmy Kettel is his name. A chap as can goo and come fifty taimes, a'most, while I be a toornin' round wance; a' knoweth a'most every rogue for fifty maile around. And if you like to goo so far as a ten-pun' note upon him, I'll zee that a' doth his best wi'un. But never a farden over what I said."

"I am very much obliged to you. Here it is; and another next week, if he requires it. I hate the sight of money, while this thing

lasts ; because I know that money is at the bottom of it. Tremlett, you are a noble fellow. Your opinion is worth something. Now don't you agree with me in thinking, that after all it comes to this—everything else has been proved rubbish—the doctors are at the bottom of it ? ”

“ Well, sir, I am afeared they be. I never knowed nort of 'em, thank the Lord. But I did hear they was oncommon greedy to cut up a poor brother of mine, as coom to trouble. I was out o' country then ; or by Gosh, I wud a' found them a job or two to do at home.”

The young man closed his lips, and thought. Tremlett's opinion, although of little value, was all that was needed to clench his own. “ I'll go and put a stop to it at once ; ” he muttered ; and after a few more words with the wrestler, he set his long legs going rapidly, and his forehead frowning, in the direction of that Æsculapian fortress, known as the Old Barn.

By this time Dr. Fox was in good health again, recovering his sprightly tone of mind, and magnanimous self-confidence. His gratitude to Frank Gilham now was as keen and strong as could be wished ; for the patient's calmness, and fortitude, and very fine constitu-

tion had secured his warm affection, by affording him such a field for skill, and such a signal triumph, as seldom yet have rejoiced a heart at once medical and surgical. Whenever Dr. Gronow came, and dwelling on the ingenious structure designed and wrought by Jemmy's skill, poured forth kind approval and the precious applause of an expert, the youthful doctor's delight was like a young mother's pride in her baby. And it surged within him all the more, because he could not—as the mother does—inundate all the world with it. Wiser too than that sweet parent, he had refused most stubbornly to risk the duration of his joy, or imperil the precious subject, by any ardour of excitement, or flutter of the system.

The patient lay, like a well-set specimen in the box of a naturalist, carded, and trussed, and pinned, and fibred, bound to maintain one immutable plane. His mother hovered round him with perpetual presence; as a house-martin flits round her fallen nestling, circling about that one pivot of the world, back for a twittering moment, again sweeping the air for a sip of him.

But the one he would have given all the world to have a sip of, even in a dream he must not see. Such was the stern decree of

the power, even more ruthless than that to which it punctually despatches us—Æsculapius, less mansuete to human tears than Æacus. To put it more plainly, and therefore better,—Master Frank did not even know that Miss Christie was on the premises.

Christie was sitting by the window, thrown out where the barn-door used to be,—where the cart was backed up with the tithe-sheaves golden, but now the gilded pills were rolled; and the only wholesome bit of metal was the sunshine on her hair—when she saw a large figure come in at the gate (which was still of the fine agricultural sort) and a shudder ran down her shapely back. With feminine speed of apprehension, she felt that it could be one man only, the man she had heard so much of, a monster of size and ferocity, the man who had “concussed” her brother’s head, and shattered an arm of great interest to her. That she ran to the door, which was wide to let the Spring in, and clapped it to the post, speaks volumes for her courage.

“You can’t come in here, Harvey Tremlett,” she cried, with a little foot set, as a forlorn hope, against the bottom of the door, which (after the manner of its kind) refused to go home, when called upon; “you have done

harm enough, and I am astonished that you should dare to imagine we would let you in."

"But I am not Harvey Tremlett, at all. I am only Tom Waldron. And I don't see why I should be shut out, when I have done no harm."

The young lady was not to be caught with chaff. She took a little peep through the chink, having learned that art in a very sweet manner of late; and then she threw open the door, and showed herself, a fine figure of blushes.

"Miss Fox, I am sure," said the visitor, smiling and lifting his hat as he had learned to do abroad. "But I won't come in, against orders, whatever the temptation may be."

"We don't know any harm of you, and you may come in;" answered Chris, who was never long taken aback. "Your sister is a dear friend of mine. I am sorry for being so rude to you."

Waldron sat down, and was cheerful for awhile, greatly pleased with his young entertainer, and her simple account of the state of things there. But when she enquired for his mother and sister, the cloud returned, and he meant business.

"You are likely to know more than I do,"

he said, "for I have not been home, and cannot go there yet. I will not trouble you with dark things—but may I have a little talk with your brother?"

Miss Fox left the room at once, and sent her brother down; and now a very strange surprise befell the sprightly doctor. Sir Thomas Waldron met him with much cordiality and warmth, for they had always been good friends, though their natures were so different; and then he delivered this fatal shot.

"I am very sorry, my dear Jemmy, but I have had to make up my mind to do a thing you won't much like. I know you have always thought a great deal of my sister, Inez; and now I am told, though I have not seen her, that you are as good as engaged to her. But you must perceive that it would never do. I could not wish for a better sort of fellow, and I have the highest opinion of you. Really I think that you would have made her as happy as the day is long, because you are so clever, and cheerful, and good-tempered, and—and in fact I may say, good all round. But you must both of you get over it. I am now the head of the family; and I don't like saying it, but I must. I cannot allow you to have Nicie; and I shall forbid Nicie to think any more of you."

"What, the deuce, do you mean, Tom?" asked Jemmy, scarcely believing his ears. "What's up now, in the name of goodness? What on earth have you got into your precious noddle?"

"Jemmy, my noddle—as you call it—may not be a quarter so clever as yours; and in fact I know it is not over-bright, without having the benefit of your opinion. But for all that, it has some common sense; and it knows its own mind pretty well; and what it says, it sticks to. You are bound to take it in a friendly manner, because that is how I intend it; and you must see the good sense of it. I shall be happy and proud myself to continue our friendship. Only you must pledge your word, that you will have nothing more to say to my sister, Inez."

"But why, Tom, why?" Fox asked again, with increasing wonder. He was half inclined to laugh at the other's solemn and official style, but he saw that it would be a dangerous thing, for Waldron's colour was rising. "What objection have you discovered, or somebody else found out for you? Surely you are dreaming, Tom!"

"No, I am not. And I shall not let you. I should almost have thought that you might

have known, without my having to tell you. If you think twice, you will see at once, that reason, and common sense, and justice, and knowledge of the world, and the feeling of a gentleman—all compel you to—to knock off, if I may so express it. I can only say that if you can't see it, everybody else can, at a glance."

"No doubt I am the thickest of the thick—though it may not be the general opinion. But do give me ever such a little hint, Tom; something of a twinkle in this frightful fog."

"Well, you are a doctor, aren't you now?"

"Certainly I am, and proud of it. Only wish I was a better one."

"Very well. The doctors have dug up my father. And no doctor ever shall marry his daughter."

The absurdity of this was of a very common kind, as the fallacy is of the commonest; and there was nothing very rare to laugh at. But Fox did the worst thing he could have done—he laughed till his sides were aching. Too late he perceived that he had been as scant of discretion, as the other was of logic.

"That's how you take it, is it, Sir?" young Waldron cried, ready to knock him down, if he could have done so without cowardice. "A

lucky thing for you, that you are on the sick-list; or I'd soon make you laugh the other side of your mouth, you guffawing jackanapes. If you can laugh at what was done to my father, it proves that you are capable of doing it. When you have done with your idiot grin, I'll just ask you one thing—never let me set eyes on your sniggering, grinning, pill-box of a face again."

"That you may be quite sure you never shall do," answered Fox, who was ashy pale with anger; "until you have begged my pardon humbly, and owned yourself a thick-headed, hot-headed fool. I am sorry that your father should have such a ninny of a cad to come after him. Everybody acknowledges that the late Sir Thomas was a gentleman."

The present Sir Thomas would not trust himself near such a fellow for another moment, but flung out of the house without his hat; while Fox proved that he was no coward, by following, and throwing it after him. And the other young man proved the like of himself, by not turning round and smashing him.

CHAPTER XII.

HIS LAST BIVOUC.

“HAVE I done wrong?” Young Waldron asked himself, as he strode down the hill, with his face still burning, and that muddy hat on. “Most fellows would have knocked him down. I hope that nice girl heard nothing of the row. The walls are jolly thick, that’s one good thing; as thick as my poor head, I dare say. But when the fellow dared to laugh! Good Heavens, is our family reduced to that? I dare say I am a hot-headed fool, though I kept my temper wonderfully; and to tell me I am not a gentleman! Well, I don’t care a rap who sees me now, for they must hear of this affair at Walderescourt. I think the best thing that I can do is to go and see old Penniloe. He is as honest as he is clear-headed. If he says I’m wrong, I’ll believe it. And I’ll take his advice about other things.”

This was the wisest resolution of his life,

inasmuch as it proved to be the happiest. Mr. Penniloe had just finished afternoon work with his pupils, and they were setting off; Pike with his rod to the long pool up the meadows, which always fished best with a cockle up it; Peckover for a long steeple-chase; and Mopuss to look for chalcedonies, and mosses, among the cleves of Hagdon Hill; for nature had nudged him into that high bliss, which a child has in routing out his father's pockets.

The Parson, who felt a warm regard for a very fine specimen of hot youth, who was at once the son of his oldest friend, and his own son in literature—though Minerva sat cross-legged at that travail—he, Mr. Penniloe, was in a gentle mood, as he seldom failed to be; moreover in a fine mood, as behoves a man who has been dealing with great authors, and walking as in a crystal world, so different from our turbid fog.

To him the young man poured forth his troubles, deeper than of certain Classic woes, too substantial to be laid by any triple cast of dust. And then he confessed his flagrant insult to a rising member of the great Profession.

“You have behaved very badly, according to your own account;” Mr. Penniloe said with

much decision, knowing that his own weakness was to let people off too easily, and feeling that duty to his ancient friend compelled him to chastise his son; "but your bad behaviour to Jemmy Fox has some excuse in quick temper provoked. Your conduct towards your mother and sister is ten times worse; because it is mean."

"I don't see how you can make that out." Young Waldron would have flown into a fury with any other man who had said this. Even as it was, he stood up with a doubtful countenance, glancing at the door.

"It is mean, in this way," continued the Parson, leaving him to go, if he thought fit, "that you have thought more of yourself than them. Because it would have hurt your pride to go to them, with this wrong still undressed, you have chosen to forget the comfort your presence must have afforded them, and the bitter pain they must feel, at hearing that you have returned and avoided them. In a like case, your father would not have acted so."

Waldron sat down again, and his great frame trembled. He covered his face with his hands, and tears shone upon his warted knuckles; for he had not yet lost all those exuberances of youth.

"I never thought of that," he muttered; "it never struck me in that way. Though Jakes said something like it. But he could not put it, as you do. I see that I have been a cad, as Jemmy Fox declared I was."

"Jemmy is older, and he should have known better than to say anything of the sort. He must have lost his temper sadly; because he could never have thought it. You have not been what he calls a cad; but in your haste and misery, you came to the wrong decision. I have spoken strongly, Tom, my boy; more strongly perhaps than I should have done. But your mother is in weak health now; and you are all in all to her."

"The best you can show me to be is a brute; and I am not sure that that is not worse than a cad. I ought to be kicked every inch of the way home; and I'll go there as fast as if I was."

"That won't do at all," replied the Curate smiling. "To go is your duty; but not to rush in like a thunderbolt, and amaze them. They have been so anxious about your return, that it must be broken very gently to them. If you wish it, and can wait a little while, I will go with you, and prepare them for it."

"Sir, if you only would—but no, I don't

deserve it. It is a great deal too much to expect of you."

"What is the time? Oh, a quarter past four. At half past, I have to baptise a child well advanced in his seventh year, whose parents have made it the very greatest personal favour to me, to allow him to be 'crassed'—as they express it. And I only discovered their neglect, last week! Who am I to find fault with any one? If you don't mind waiting for about half-an-hour, I will come back for you, and meanwhile Mrs. Muggridge will make your hat look better; Master Jemmy must have lost his temper too, I am afraid. Good-bye for the moment; unless I am punctual to the minute, I know too well what will happen—they will all be off. For they 'can't zee no vally in it,' as they say. Alas, alas, and we are wild about Missions to Hindoos, and Hottentots!"

As soon as Mr. Penniloe had left the house, the youth, who had been lowered in his own esteem, felt a very strong desire to go after him. Possibly this was increased by the sad reproachful gaze of Thyatira; who, as an old friend, longed to hear all about him, but was too well-mannered to ask questions. Cutting all consideration short—which is often the best

thing to do with it—he put on his fairly re-established hat, and cared not a penny whether Mrs. Channing, the baker's wife, was taking a look into the street or not; or even Mrs. Tapscott, with the rosemary over her window.

Then he turned in at the lych-gate, thinking of the day when his father's body had lain there (as the proper thing was for a body to do) and then he stood in the churchyard, where the many ways of death divided. Three main paths, all well-gravelled, ran among those who had toddled in the time of childhood down them, with wormwood and stock-gilly flowers in their hands; and then sauntered along them, with hands in pockets, and eyes for the maidens over tombstone-heads; and then had come limping along on their staffs; and now were having all this done for them, without knowing anything about it.

None of these ways was at all to his liking. Peace—at least in death—was there, green turf and the rounded bank, gray stone, and the un-household name, to be made out by a grandchild perhaps, proud of skill in ancient letters, prouder still of a pocket-knife. What a faint scratch on soft stone! And yet the character far and away stronger than that of the lettered times that follow it.

Young Waldron was not of a morbid cast, neither was his mind introspective; as (for the good of mankind) is ordained to those who have the world before them. He turned to the right by a track across the grass, followed the bend of the churchyard wall, and fearing to go any further, lest he should stumble on his father's outraged grave, sat down upon a gap of the gray enclosure. This gap had been caused by the sweep of tempest that went up the valley at the climax of the storm. The wall, being low, had taken little harm; but the great west gable of the Abbey had been smitten, and swung on its back, as a trap-door swings upon its hinges. Thick flint structure, and time-worn mullion, massive buttress, and deep foundation, all had gone flat, and turned their fangs up, rending a chasm in the tattered earth. But this dark chasm was hidden from view, by a pile of loose rubble, and chunks of flint, that had rattled down when the gable fell, and striking the cross-wall had lodged thereon, breaking the cope in places, and hanging (with tangles of ivy, and tufts of toad-flax) over the interval of wall and ruin, as a snowdrift overhangs a ditch.

Here the young man sat down; as if any sort of place would do for him. The gap in

the wall was no matter to him, but happened to suit his downcast mood, and the misery of the moment. Here he might sit, and wait, until Mr. Penniloe had got through a job, superior to the burial-service, because no one could cut you in pieces, directly afterwards, without being hanged for it. He could see Mr. Penniloe's black stick, standing like a little Parson—for some of them are proud of such resemblance—in the great south porch of the church; and thereby he knew that he could not miss his friend. As he lifted his eyes to the ancient tower, and the black yew-tree still steadfast, and the four vanes (never of one opinion as to the direction of the wind, in anything less than half a gale), and the jackdaws come home prematurely, after digging up broad-beans, to settle their squabble about their nests; and then as he lowered his gaze to the tombstones, and the new foundation-arches, and other labours of a parish now so hateful to him—heavy depression, and crushing sense of the wrath of God against his race, fell upon his head; as the ruin behind him had fallen on its own foundations.

He felt like an old man, fain to die, when time is gone weary and empty. What was the use of wealth to him, of bodily strength,

of bright ambition to make his Country proud of him, even of love of dearest friends, and wedded bliss—if such there were—and children who would honour him? All must be under one black ban of mystery insoluble; never could there be one hearty smile, one gay thought, one soft delight; but ever the view of his father's dear old figure desecrated, mangled, perhaps lectured on. He could not think twice of that, but groaned—"The Lord in Heaven be my help! The Lord deliver me from this life!"

He was all but delivered of this life—happy, or wretched—it was all but gone. For as he flung his body back, suiting the action to his agony of mind—crash went the pile of jagged flint, the hummocks of dead mortar, and the wattle of shattered ivy. He cast himself forward, just in time, as all that had carried him broke and fell, churning, and grinding, and clashing together, sending up a cloud of powdered lime.

So sudden was the rush, that his hat went with it, leaving his brown curls grimed with dust, and his head for a moment in a dazed condition, as of one who has leapt from an earthquake. He stood with his back to the wall, and the muscles of his great legs quivering,

after the strain of their spring for dear life. Then scarcely yet conscious of his hair-breadth escape, he descried Mr. Penniloe coming from the porch, and hastened without thought to meet him.

“Billy-jack!” said the clergyman, smiling, yet doubtful whether he ought to smile. “They insisted on calling that child ‘Billy-jack.’ ‘William-John’ they would not hear of. I could not object, for it was too late; and there is nothing in it uncanonical. But I scarcely felt as I should have done, when I had to say—‘Billy-jack, I baptise thee,’ etc. I hope they did not do it to try me. Now the Devonshire mind is very deep and subtle; though generally supposed to be the simplest of the simple. But what has become of your hat, my dear boy? Surely Thyatira has had time enough to clean it.”

“She cleaned it beautifully. But it was waste of time. It has gone down a hole. Come, and I will show you. I wonder my head did not go with it. What a queer place this has become!”

“A hole! What hole can there be about here?” Mr. Penniloe asked, as he followed the young man. “The downfall of the Abbey has made a heap, rather than what can be called a

hole. But I declare you are right! Why, I never saw this before; and I looked along here with Haddon, not more than a week ago. Don't come too near; it is safe enough for me, but you are like Neptune, a shaker of the earth. Alas for our poor ivy!"

He put on his glasses, and peered through the wall-gap, into the flint-strewn depth outside. Part of the ruins, just dislodged, had rolled into a pit, or some deep excavation; the crown of which had broken in, probably when the gable fell. The remnant of the churchyard wall was still quite sound, and evidently stood away from all that had gone on outside.

"Be thankful to God, for your escape," Mr. Penniloe said, looking back at the youth. "It has indeed been a narrow one. If you had been carried down there head-foremost, even your strong frame would have been crushed like an egg-shell."

"I am not sure about that; but I don't want to try it. I think I can see a good piece of my hat; and I am not going to be done out of it. Will you be kind enough, sir, to wait, while I go round by the stile, and get in at that end? You see that it is easy to get down there; but a frightful job from this side. You won't mind waiting, will you, sir?"

"If you will take my advice," said the Curate, "you will be content to let well alone. It is the great lesson of the age. But nobody attends to it."

The young man did not attend to it; and for once Mr. Penniloe had given bad advice; though most correct in principle, and in practice too, nine times and a half out of every ten.

"Here I am, sir. Can you see me?" Sir Thomas Waldron shouted up the hole. "It is a queer place, and no mistake. Please to stop just where you are. Then you can give me notice, if you see the ground likely to cave in. Halloo! Why, I never saw anything like it! Here's a stone arch, and a tunnel beyond it, just like what you've got at the rectory, only ever so much bigger. Looks as if the old Abbey had butted up against it, until it all got blown away. If I had got a fellow down here to help me, I believe I could get into it. But all these chunks are in the way."

"My dear young friend, it will soon be dark; and we have more important things to see to. You are not at all safe down there; if the sides fell in, you would never come out alive."

"It has cost me a hat; and I won't be done.

I can't go home without a hat, till dark. I am not coming up, till I know all about it. Do oblige me, sir, by having the least little bit of patience."

Mr. Penniloe smiled. The request, as coming from such a quarter, pleased him. And presently the young man began to fling up great lumps of clotted flint, as if they were marbles, right and left.

"What a volcano you are!" cried the Parson, as the youth in the crater stopped to breathe. "It is nothing but a waste of energy. The hole won't run away, my dear Tom. You had much better leave it for the proper man to-morrow."

"Don't say that. I am the proper man." How true his words were, he had no idea. "But I hear somebody whistling. If I had only got a fellow, to keep this stuff back, I could get on like a house on fire."

It was Pike coming back from the long pool in the meadow, with a pretty little dish of trout for supper. His whistling was fine; as a fisherman's should be, for want of something better in his mouth; and he never got over the Churchyard stile, without this little air of consolation for the ghosts.

As he topped the ridge of meadow that looks

down on the river, Mr. Penniloe waved his hat to him, over the breach of the churchyard wall; and he nothing loth stuck his rod into the ground, pulled off his jacket, and went down to help.

"All clear now. We can slip in like a rabbit. But it looks uncommonly black inside, and it seems to go a long way underground;" Waldron shouted up to the clergyman. "We cannot do anything, without a light."

"I'll tell you what, sir," Pike chimed in. "This passage runs right into the church, I do believe."

"That is the very thing I have been thinking;" answered Mr. Penniloe. "I have heard of a tradition to that effect. I should like to come down, and examine it."

"Not yet, sir; if you please. There is scarcely room for three. And it would be a dangerous place for you. But if you could only give us something like a candle——"

"Oh, I know!" The sage Pike suggested, with an angler's quickness. "Ask him to throw us down one of the four torches stuck up at the lych-gate. They burn like fury; and I dare say you have got a lucifer, or a Promethean."

"Not a bad idea, Pike;" answered Mr.

Penniloe. "I believe that each of them will burn for half-an-hour."

Soon he returned with the driest of them, from the iron loop under the covered space; and this took fire very heartily, being made of twisted tow soaked in resin.

"I am rather big for this job;" said Sir Thomas, as the red flame sputtered in the archway, "perhaps you would like to go first, my young friend."

"Very much obliged," replied Pike drawing back; "but I don't seem to feel myself called upon to rush into the bowels of the earth, among six centuries of ghosts. I had better stop here, perhaps, till you come back."

"Very well. At any rate hold my coat. It is bad enough; I don't want to make it worse. I shan't be long, I dare say. But I am bound to see the end of it."

Young Waldron handed his coat to Pike, and stooping his tall head with the torch well in front of him, plunged into the dark arcade. Grim shadows flitted along the roof, as the sound of his heavy steps came back; then the torchlight vanished round a bend of wall, and nothing could either be seen or heard. Mr. Penniloe, in some anxiety, leaned over the breach in the churchyard fence, striving to see

what was under his feet ; while Pike mustered courage to stand in the archway—which was of roughly chiselled stone—but kept himself ready for instant flight, as he drew deep breaths of excitement.

By-and-by, the torch came quivering back, throwing flits of light along the white-flint roof ; and behind it a man, shaking worse than any shadow, and whiter than any torchlit chalk.

“Great God !” He cried, staggering forth, and falling with his hand on his heart against the steep side of the pit. “As sure as there is a God in heaven, I have found my father !”

“What !” cried the Parson ; “Pike, see to the torch ; or you’ll both be on fire.”

In a moment, he ran round by way of the stile, and slid into the pit, without thinking of his legs, laying hold of some long rasps of ivy. Pike very nimbly leaped up the other side ; this was not the sort of hole to throw a fly in.

“Give me the torch. You stay here, Tom. You have had enough of it.” Mr. Penniloe’s breath was short, because of the speed he had made of it. “It is my place now. You stop here, and get the air.”

“I think it is rather my place, than of any

other man upon the earth. Am I afraid of my own dear dad? Follow me, and I will show him to you."

He went with a slow step, dazed out of all wonder—as a man in a dream accepts everything—down the dark passage again, and through the ice-cold air, and the shivering fire. Then he stopped suddenly, and stooped the torch, stooping his curly head in lowliness behind it; and there, as if set down by the bearers for a rest, lay a long oaken coffin.

Mr. Penniloe came to his side, and gazed. At their feet lay the good and true-hearted Colonel, or all of him left below the heaven, resting placidly, unprofaned, untouched by even the hand of time; unsullied and honourable in his death, as in his loyal and blameless life.

The clear light fell upon the diamond of glass, (framed in the oak above his face, as was often done then for the last look of love) and it showed his white curls, and tranquil forehead, and eyelids for ever closed against all disappointment.

His son could not speak, but sobbed, and shook, with love, and reverence, and manly grief. But the clergyman, with a godly joy, and immortal faith, and heavenly hope, knelt

at the foot, and lifted hands and eyes to the God of heaven.

“Behold, He hath not forsaken us! His mercy is over all His works. And His goodness is upon the children of men.”

CHAPTER XIII.

TWO FINE LESSONS.

AT the Old Barn that afternoon, no sooner was young Sir Thomas gone, than remarkable things began to happen. As was observed in a previous case, few of us are yet so vast of mind, as to feel deeply, and fairly enjoy the justice of being served with our own sauce. Haply this is why sauce and justice are in Latin the self-same word. Few of us even are so candid, as to perceive when it comes to pass; more often is a world of difference found betwixt what we gave, and what we got.

Fox was now treated by Nicie's brother, exactly as he had treated Gilham about his sister Christie. He was not remarkably rash of mind—which was ever so much better for himself and friends—yet he was quick of perception; and when his sister came and looked at him, and said with gentle sympathy—"Oh, Jemmy, has Sir Thomas forbidden your bans?

No wonder you threw his hat at him"—it was a little more than he could do, not to grin at the force of analogy.

"He is mad." He replied, with strong decision. Yet at the twinkle of her eyes, he wondered whether she held that explanation valid, in a like case, not so very long ago.

"I have made up my mind to it altogether;" he continued, with the air magnanimous. "It is useless to strive against the force of circumstances."

"Made up your mind to give up Nicie, because her brother disapproves of it?" Christie knew well enough what he meant. But can girls be magnanimous?

"I should think not. How can you be so stupid? What has a brother's approval to do with it? Do you think I care twopence for fifty thousand brothers? Brothers are all very well in their way; but let them stick to their own business. A girl's heart is her own, I should hope; and her happiness depends on herself, not her brother. I call it a great piece of impudence, for a brother to interfere in such matters."

"Oh!" said Christie, and nothing more. Neither did she even smile; but went to the window, and smoothed her apron, the pretty

one she wore, when she was mixing water-colours.

"You shall come and see him now;" said Jemmy, looking at the light that was dancing in her curls, but too lofty to suspect that inward laughter made them dance. "It can't hurt him now; and my opinion is that it might even do him a great deal of good. I'll soon have him ready, and I'll send his blessed mother to make another saucepanful of chicken broth. And Chris, I'll give you clear decks, honour bright."

"I am quite at a loss to understand your meaning." The mendacious Christie turned round, and fixed her bright eyes upon his most grandly; as girls often do, when they tell white lies—perhaps to see how they are swallowed.

"Very well then; that is all right. It will save a lot of trouble; and perhaps it is better to leave him alone."

"There again! You never seem to understand me, Jemmy! And of course you don't care how much it upsets a poor patient, never to see a change of faces. Of course you are very kind; and so is Dr. Gronow; and poor Mrs. Gilham is a most delightful person. Still after being for all that time so desperately

limited—that's not the word at all—I mean, so to some extent restricted, or if you prefer it prohibited, from—from any little change, any sort of variety of expressions, of surroundings, of in fact society——”

“Ah yes, no doubt! Of etcetera, etcetera. But go you on floundering, till I come back, and perhaps then you will know what you mean. Perhaps also you would look a little more decent with your apron off,” Dr. Fox suggested, with the noble rudeness so often dealt out to sisters. “Be sure you remind him that yesterday was Leap-year's day; and then perhaps you will be able to find some one to understand you.”

“If that is the case, you may be quite certain that I won't go near him.”

But before very long she thought better of that. Was it just to punish one for the offences of another? With a colour like the first bud of monthly rose peeping through its sepals in the southern corner, she ran into the shrubbery—for there was nothing to call a garden—and gathered a little posy of Russian violets and wild primrose. Then she pulled her apron off, and had a good look at herself, and could not help knowing that she had not seen a lovelier thing for a long time; and if love would only

multiply it by two,—and it generally does so by a thousand—the result would be something stupendous, ineffable, adorable.

Such thoughts are very bright and cheerful, full of glowing youth and kindness, young romance, and contempt of earth. But the longer we plod on this earth, the deeper we stick into it; as must be when the foot grows heavy, having no *talaria*. Long enduring pain produces a like effect with lapse of years. The spring of the system loses coil, from being on perpetual strain; sad proverbs flock into the brain, instead of dancing verses.

Frank Gilham had been ploughed and harrowed, clod-crushed, drilled, and scarified by the most advanced, enlightened, and practical of all medical high-farmers. If ever Fox left him, to get a breath of air, Gronow came in to keep the screw on; and when they were both worn out, young Webber (who began to see how much he had to learn, and what was for his highest interest) was allowed to sit by, and do nothing. A consultation was held, whenever the time hung heavily on their hands; and Webber would have liked to say a word, if it could have been uttered without a snub. Meanwhile Frank Gilham got the worst of it.

At last he had been allowed to leave his bed, and taste a little of the fine Spring air, flowing down from Hagdon Hill, and bearing first waft of the furze-bloom. Haggard weariness and giddy lightness, and a vacant wondering doubt (as to who or what he was, that scarcely seemed worth puzzling out), would have proved to any one who cared to know it, that his head had lain too long in one position, and was not yet reconciled to the change. And yet it should have welcomed this relief, if virtue there be in heredity, inasmuch as this sofa came from White Post farm, and must have comforted the head of many a sick progenitor.

The globe of thought being in this state, and the arm of action crippled, the question was—would heart arise, dispense with both, and have its way?

For awhile it seemed a doubtful thing; so tedious had the conflict been, and such emptiness left behind it. The young man, after dreams most blissful, and hopes too golden to have any kin with guilt, was reduced to bare bones, and plastered elbows, and knees unsafe to go down upon. But the turn of the tide of human life quivers to the influence of heaven.

In came Christie, like a flush of health, rosy with bright maidenhood; yet tremulous as a

lily is, with gentle fear and tenderness. Pity is akin to love—as those who know them both, and in their larger hearts have felt them, for our smaller sakes pronounce—but when the love is far in front, and pauses at the check of pride; what chance has pride, if pity comes, and takes her mistress by the hand, and whispers—“try to comfort him?”

None can tell, who are not in the case, and those who are know little of it, how these strange things come to pass. But sure it is that they have their way. The bashful, proud, light-hearted maiden, ready to make a joke of love, and laugh at such a fantasy, was so overwhelmed with pity, that the bashfulness forgot to blush, the pride cast down its frightened eyes, and the levity burst into tears. But of all these things she remembered none.

And forsooth they may well be considered doubtful, in common with many harder facts; because the house was turned upside down, before any more could be known of it. There was coming, and going, and stamping of feet, horses looking in at the door, and women calling out of it; and such a shouting and hurrahing, not only here but all over the village, that the Perle itself might well have

stopped, like Simöis and Scamander, to ask what the fish out of water were doing. And it might have stopped long, without being much wiser; so thoroughly everybody's head was flown, and everybody's mouth filled with much more than the biggest ears found room for.

To put it in order is a hopeless job, because all order was gone to grit. But as concerns the Old Barn (whose thatch, being used to quiet eaves-droppings, had enough to make it stand up in sheaf again)—first dashed up a young man on horseback, (and the sympathetic nag was half mad also) the horse knocking sparks out of the ground, as if he had never heard of lucifers, and the man with his legs all out of saddle, waving a thing that looked like a letter, and shouting as if all literature were comprised in *vivâ voce*. Now this was young Farrant, the son of the Churchwarden; and really there was no excuse for him; for the Farrants are a very clever race; and as yet competitive examination had not made the sight of paper loathsome to any mind cultivating self-respect.

“You come out, and just read this;” He shouted to the Barn in general. “You never heard such a thing in all your life. All the

village is madder than any March hare. I shan't tell you a word of it. You come out and read. And if that doesn't fetch you out, you must be a clam of oysters. If you don't believe me, come and see it for yourselves. Only you will have to get by Jakes, and he is standing at the mouth, with his French sword drawn."

"In the name of Heaven, what the devil do you mean?" cried Fox, running out, and catching fire of like madness, of all human elements the most explosive, "and this—why, this letter is the maddest thing of all! A man who was bursting to knock me down, scarcely two gurgles of the clock ago! And now, I am his beloved Jimmy! Mrs. Gilham, do come out. Surely that chicken has been stewed to death. Oh, Ma'am, you have some sense in you. Everybody else is gone off his head. Who can make head or tail of this? Let me entreat you to read it, Mrs. Gilham. Farrant, you'll be over that colt's head directly. Mrs. Gilham, this is meant for a saner eye than mine. Your head-piece is always full of self-possession."

Highly flattered with this tribute, the old lady put on her spectacles, and read, slowly and decorously.

“BELOVED JEMMY,

“I am all that you called me, a hot-headed fool, and a cad; and everything vile on the back of it. The doctors are the finest chaps alive, because they have never done harm to the dead. Come down at once, and put a bar across, because Jakes must have his supper. Perlycross folk are the best in the world, and the kindest-hearted, but we must not lett them go in there. I am off home, for if anybody else was to get in front of me, and tell my mother, I should go wild, and she would be quite upsett. When you have done all you think proper, come up and see poor Nicie.

“From your affectionate, and very sorry,
“T. R. WALDRON.”

“Now the other, Ma’am!” cried Dr. Fox.
“Here is another from the Parson. Oh come now, we shall have a little common sense.”

“MY DEAR JEMMY,

“It has pleased the Lord, who never afflicts us without good purpose, to remove that long and very heavy trouble from us. We have found the mortal remains of my dear friend, untouched by any human hand, in a hollow way leading from the Abbey to the

Church. We have not yet discovered how it happened; and I cannot stop to tell you more, for I must go at once to Walderscourt, lest rumour should get there before us; and Sir Thomas must not go alone, being of rather headlong, though very noble nature. Sergeant Jakes has been placed on guard, against any rash curiosity. I have sent for the two Churchwardens, and can leave it safely to them and to you, to see that all is done properly. If it can be managed, without undue haste, the coffin should be placed inside the Church, and the doors locked until the morning. When that is done, barricade the entrance to the tunnel; although I am sure that the people of our parish would have too much right feeling, as well as apprehension, to attempt to make their way in, after dark. To-morrow, I trust we shall offer humble thanks to the Giver of all good, for this great mercy. I propose to hold a short special service; though I fear there is no precedent in the Prayer-book. This will take a vast weight off your mind, as well as mine, which has been sorely tried. I beg you not to lose a minute, as many people might become unduly excited.

“Most truly yours,

“PHILIP PENNIOLE.

“P.S.—This relieves us also from another dark anxiety, simply explaining the downfall of the S.E. corner of the Chancel.”

“It seems hard upon me; but it must be right, because the Parson has decreed it;” Dr. Fox cried, without a particle of what is now called “slavish adulation of the Church”—which scarcely stuck up for herself in those days—but by virtue of the influence which a kind and good man always gains, when he does not overstrain his rights. “I am off, Mrs. Gilham, I can trust you to see to the pair of invalids upstairs.”

Then he jumped upon young Mr. Farrant’s horse, and leaving him to follow at foot leisure, dashed down the hill towards Perlycross. At the four cross-roads, which are the key of the position, and have all the village and the valley in command, he found as fine a concourse perhaps as had been there since the great days of the Romans. Not a rush of dread, and doubting, and of shivering back-bones, such as had been on that hoary morning, when the sun came through the fog, and showed Churchwarden Farmer John, and Channing the clerk, and blacksmith Crang, trudging from the potato-field, full of ghastly tidings, and en-

countering at that very spot Sergeant Jakes, and Cornish, and the tremulous tramp of half the village, afraid of resurrection.

Instead of hurrying from the churchyard, as a haunt of ghouls and fiends, all were hastening towards it now, with deep respect reviving. The people who lived beyond the bridge, and even beyond the factory, and were much inclined by local right to sit under the Dissenting minister—himself a very good man, and working in harmony with the Curate—many of these, and even some from Priestwell, having heard of it, pushed their right to know everything, in front of those who lived close to the Church and looked through the railings every day. Farmer John Horner was there on his horse, trotting slowly up and down, as brave as a mounted policeman is, and knowing every one by name called out to him to behave himself. Moreover Walter Haddon stood at the door of the *Ivy-bush*, with his coat off, and his shirtsleeves rolled, and ready to double his fist at any man who only drank small beer, at the very first sign of tumult. But candidly speaking this was needless, powerful as the upheaval was, and hot the spirit of enquiry; for the wives of most of the men were there, and happily in an

English crowd that always makes for good manners.

Fox was received with loud hurrahs, and many ran forward to shake his hand; some, who had been most black and bitter in their vile suspicions, having the manliness to beg his pardon, and abuse themselves very heartily. He forgave them with much frankness, as behoves an Englishman, and with a pleasant smile at their folly, which also is nicely national. For after all, there is no other race that can give and take as we do; not by any means headlong, yet insisting upon decision—of the other side, at any rate—and thus quickening the sense of justice upon the average, in our favour.

Fox, with the truly British face of one who is understood at last, but makes no fuss about it, gave up his horse at the lych-gate, and made off where he was beckoned for. Here were three great scaffold-poles and slings fixed over the entrance to the ancient under-way; and before dark all was managed well. And then a short procession, headed by the martial march of Jakes, conveyed into the venerable Church the mortal part of a just and kind man and a noble soldier, to be consigned to-morrow to a more secure, and ever tranquil, and still honoured resting-place.

This being done, the need of understanding must be satisfied. Dr. Fox, and Dr. Gronow, with the two Churchwardens, and Channing the clerk, descended the ladder into the hole, and with a couple of torches kindled went to see the cause and manner of this strange yet simple matter—a four-month mystery of darkness, henceforth as clear as daylight.

When they beheld it, they were surprised, not at the thing itself—for it could scarcely have happened otherwise, under the circumstances—but at the coincidences, which had led so many people of very keen intelligence into, as might almost be said, every track, except the right one. And this brought home to them one great lesson—“*If you wish to be sure of a thing, see it with your own good eyes.*” And another—but that comes afterwards.

The passage, dug by the Monks no doubt, led from the Abbey directly westward to the chancel of the Church, probably to enable them to carry their tapers burning, and discharge their duties there promptly and with vestments dry, in defiance of the weather. The crown, of loose flints set in mortar, was some eight feet underground, and the line it took was that adopted in all Christian burial. The grave of the late Sir Thomas Waldron

was prepared, as he had wished, far away from the family vault (which had sadly undermined the Church), and towards the eastern end of the yard, as yet not much inhabited. As it chanced, the bottom lay directly along a weak, or worn-out part of the concrete arch below; and the men who dug it said at the time that their spades had struck on something hard, which they took to be loose blocks of flint. However being satisfied with their depth, and having orders to wall the bottom, they laid on either side some nine or ten courses of brickwork, well flushed in with strong and binding mortar; but the ends being safe and bricks running short, to save any further trouble, they omitted the cross-wall at the ends. Thus when the weight of earth cast in pressed more and more heavily upon the heavy coffin, the dome of concreted flints below collapsed, the solid oaken box dropped quietly to the bottom of the tunnel, and the dwarf brick sides having no tie across, but being well bonded together, and well-footed, fell across the vacancy into one another, forming a new arch, or more correctly a splay span-roof, in lieu of the old arch which had yielded to the strain. Thus the earth above took this new bearing, and the surface of the ground was

no more disturbed than it always is by settlement.

No wonder then that in the hurried search, by men who had not been down there before, and had not heard of any brickwork at the sides, and were at that moment in a highly nervous state, not only was the grave reported empty—which of course was true enough—but no suspicion was entertained that the bottom they came to (now covered with earth) was anything else than a rough platform for the resting-place. And the two who could have told them better, being proud of their skill in foundations, had joined the builders' staff, and been sent away to distant jobs.

In the heat of foregone conclusion, and the terror created by the blacksmith's tale, and the sad condition of that faithful little *Jess*, the report had been taken as final. No further quest seemed needful; and at Squire Mockham's order, the empty space had been filled in at once, for fear of the excitement, and throng of vulgar gazers, gathering and thickening around the empty grave.

Such are the cases that make us wonder at the power of co-incidence, and the very strange fact that the less things seem to have to do with one another, the greater is their force

upon the human mind, when it tries to be too logical.

Many little things, all far apart, had been fetched together by fine reasoning process, and made to converge towards a very fine error, with certainty universal.

Even that humble agent, or patient, little *Jess*—despised as a dog, by the many who have no delight in their better selves—had contributed very largely to the confluence of panic. If she could only have thrown the light of language on her woeful plight, the strongest clench to the blacksmith's tale would never have come near his pincers. For the slash that rewarded her true love fell, not from the spade of a Churchyard-robber, but from a poacher's bill-hook. This has already been intimated; and Mr. Penniloe must have learned it then; if he had simply taken time, instead of making off at five miles an hour, when Speccotty wanted to tell his tale. This should be a warning to Clergymen; for perhaps there was no other man in the parish, whose case the good parson would thus have postponed, without prospect of higher consolation. And it does seem a little too hard upon a man, that because his mind is gone astray unawares, his soul should drop out of cultivation!

That poor little spaniel was going home sadly, to get a bit of breakfast, and come back to her duty; when trespassing unwittingly upon the poacher's tricks, at early wink of daylight, she was taken for a minion of the Evil One, and met with a vigour which is shown too seldom, by even true sportsmen, to his emissaries. Perhaps before she quitted guard, she may have had a nip at the flowers on the grave, and dropped them back, when she failed to make sweet bones of them.

Without further words—though any number of words, if their weight were by the score, would be too few—the slowest-headed man in Perlycross might lay to his heart the second lesson, read in as mild a voice as Penniloe's, above. And without a word at all, he may be trusted to go home with it; when the job is of other folk's hands, but his own pocket.

"*Never scamp your work,*" was preached more clearly by this long trouble, and degradation of an honourable parish, than if Mr. Penniloe had stood in the pulpit, for a week of Sundays, with the mouth of King Solomon laid to his ear, and the trump of the Royal Mail upon his lips.

CHAPTER XIV.

AND ONE STILL FINER.

IF it be sweet to watch at ease the troubles of another, how much sweeter to look back, from the vantage-ground of happiness, upon one's own misfortunes! To be able to think—"well, it was too bad! Another week would have killed me. How I pulled through it, is more than I can tell; for everybody was against me! And the luck—the luck kept playing leap-frog; fifty plagues all upon one another's back; and my poor little self at the bottom. Not a friend came near me; they were all so sorry, but happened to be frightfully down themselves. I assure you, my dear, if it had not been for you, and the thought of our blessed children, and perhaps my own—well, I won't say 'pluck,' but determination to go through with it; instead of arranging these flowers for dinner, you would have been wreathing them for a sadder purpose."

The lady sheds a tear, and says—"Darling Jack, see how you have made my hand shake! I have almost spoiled that truss of Hoya, and this Schubertia won't stand up. But you never said a word about it, at the time! Was that fair to me, Jack?" And the like will come to pass again, perhaps next year, perhaps next week.

But the beauty of country-life, as it then prevailed (ere the hungry hawk of Stock-exchange poised his wings above the stock-dove) was to take things gently, softly, with a cooing faith in goodness, both above us and around. Men must work; but being born (as their best friends, the horses, are), for that especial purpose, why should they make it still more sad, by dwelling upon it, at the nose-bag time? How much wiser to allow that turbulent bit of stuff, the mind, to abide at ease, and take things in, rather than cast them forth half-chewed, in the style of our present essayists?

Now this old village was the right sort of place, to do such things, without knowing it. There was no great leading intellect (with his hands returned to feet), to beat the hollow drum, and play shrill fife, and set everybody tumbling over his best friend's head. The rule of the men was to go on, according to the way in

which their fathers went; talking as if they were running on in front, but sticking effectually to the old coat-tail. Which in the long run is the wisest thing to do.

They were proud of their church, when the Sunday mood was on, and their children came home to tell about it.

There she was. Let her stand; if the folk with money could support her. It was utterly impossible to get into their heads any difference betwixt the Church in the churchyard, and the one that inhabits the sky above. When a man has been hard at work all the week, let his wife be his better half on Sunday.

Nothing that ever can be said, or done, by the most ardent "pastor," will ever produce that enthusiasm among the tegs of his flock, which spreads so freely among the ewes, and lambs. Mr. Penniloe would not be called a *Pastor*; to him the name savoured of a cant conceit. Neither did he call himself a *Priest*; for him it was quite enough to be a Clergyman of the Church of England; and to give his life to that.

Therefore, when the time came round, and the turn of the year was fit for it, this Parson of that humbler type was happy to finish, without fuss, the works that he had undertaken,

with a lofty confidence in the Lord, which had come to ground too often. His faith, though fine, had never been of that grandly abstract quality, which expects the ravens to come down, with bread instead of bills, and build a nest for sweet doves *gratis*. To pay every penny that was fairly due, and shorten no man of his Saturday wage, towards the Sunday consolation; to perceive that business must not be treated as a purely spiritual essence; and to know that a great many very good people drip away (as tallow does from its own wick) from their quick flare of promises; also to bear the brunt of all, and cast up the toppling column, with the balance coming down on his own chest—what wonder that he had scarcely any dark hair left, and even the silver was inclined to say adieu?

When a man, who is getting on in years, comes out of a long anxiety, about money, and honour, and his sense of right, he finds even in the soft flush of relief, that a great deal of his spring is gone. A Bachelor of Arts, when his ticks have been paid by a groaning governor, is fit and fresh to start again, and seldom dwells with due remorse upon the sacrifice Vicarious. His father also, if of right paternal spirit, soars above the unpleasant subject; leaves it to the

mother to drive home the lesson—which she feels already to be too severe—and says, “Well, Jack, you have got your degree; and that’s more than the Squire’s son can boast of.”

But the ancient M.A. of ten lustres, who has run into debt on his own hook, and felt the hook running into him, is in very different plight, even when he has wriggled off. Parson Penniloe was sorely humbled, his placid forehead sadly wrinkled, and his kindly eyes uncertain how to look at his brother men, even from the height of pulpit; when in his tremulous throat stuck fast that stern and difficult precept—“Owe no man anything.”

Even the strongest of mankind can scarcely manage to come up to that, when fortune is not with him, and his family tug the other way. The glory of the Lord may be a lofty prospect, but becomes a cloudy pillar, when the column is cast up, and will not square with cash in hand. Scarcely is it too much to say, that since the days of Abraham, it would have been hard to find a man of stronger faith than Penniloe,—except at the times when he broke down (in vice of matters physical), and proved at one break two ancient creeds—*Exceptio probat regulam*; and *Corruptio optimi pessima*.

While he was on the balance now, as a man

of the higher ropes should be, lifting the upper end of his pole, that the glory of his parish shone again, yet feeling the butt inclined to swag, by reason of the bills stuck upon it, who should come in to the audience and audit but young Sir Thomas Waldron? This youth had thought perhaps too little of himself,—because those candid friends, his brother-boys had always spoken of his body so kindly, without a single good word for his mind—but now he was authorized, and even ordered, by universal opinion to take a much fairer view of his own value.

Nothing that ever yet came to pass has gone into words without some shift of colour, and few things even without change of form; and so it would have been beyond all nature if the events above reported had been told with perfect accuracy even here. How much less could this be so, in the hot excitement of the time, with every man eager to excel his neighbour's narrative, and every woman burning to recall it with her own pure imagination! What then of the woman, who had been blessed enough to enrich the world, and by the same gift ennoble it, with the hero, who at a stroke had purged the family, the parish, and the nation?

Nevertheless he came in gently, modestly, and with some misgivings, into the room, where he had trembled, blushed, and floundered on all fours, over the old gray Latin steps, which have broken many a knee-cap.

“If you please, sir,” he said to his old tutor, who alone had taught him anything, for at Eton he had barely learned good manners; “my mother begs you to read this. And we are all ashamed of our behaviour.”

“No, Tom, no. You have no cause for that. Your mother may have been a little hard at first. But she has meant to be just throughout. The misery she has passed through—none but herself can realise.”

“You see, sir, she does not sing out about things, as most women do; and that of course makes it ever so much worse for her.”

The young man spoke, like some deep student of feminine nature; but his words were only those of the good housekeeper at Walderscourt. Mr. Penniloe took them in that light, and began to read without reply.

“Truly esteemed and valued sir. With some hesitation of the mind I come to say that in all I have said and done, my mind has been of the wrong intelligence most largely. It always appears in this land of Britain, as if

nobody of it could make a mistake. But we have not in my country such great wisdom and good fortune. Also in any other European land of which I have the acquaintance, the natives are wrong in their opinions sometimes.

“But this does not excuse me of my mistake. I have been unjust to you and to all people living around my place of dwelling. But by my dear son, and his very deep sagacity, it has been made manifest that your good people were considered guilty, without proper justice, of a wrong upon my husband’s memory. Also that your good church, of which he thought so well in the course of his dear life, has treated him not with ignominy, but with the best of her attention, receiving him into the sacred parts, where the Priests of our religion in the times of truth conversed. This is to me of the holiest and most gracious consolation.

“Therefore I entreat you to accept, for the uses of so good a building, the little sum herewith committed to your care, which flows entirely from my own resources, and not from the property of my dear husband, so much engaged in the distribution of the law. When that is disengaged, my dear son Rodrigo, with my approbation will contribute from it the same amount for the perfection of the matter.”

“One, two, three, four, five. And every one of them a hundred pounds! My dear Tom, I feel a doubt——”

Mr. Penniloe leaned back and thought. He was never much excited about money, except when he owed it to, or for the Lord.

“I call it very poor amends indeed. What would ten times as much be, after all that you have suffered? And how can you refuse it, when it is not for yourself? My mother will be hurt most dreadfully, and never think well again of the Church of England.”

“Tom, you are right;” Mr. Penniloe replied, while a smile flitted over his conscience. “I should indeed convey a false impression of the character of our dear mother. But as for the other £500—well——”

“My father’s character must be considered, as well as your good mother’s.” Sir Thomas was not strong at metaphor. “And I am sure of one thing, sir. If he could have known what would happen about him, and how beautifully every one behaved, except his own people—but it’s no use talking. If you don’t take it, I shall join the Early Methodists. What do you think of that, sir? I am always as good as my word, you know.”

“Ah! Ah! It may be so;” the Curate

answered thoughtfully, returning to the mildness of exclamation from which these troubles had driven him. "But allow me a little time for consideration. Your mother's very generous gift, I can accept without hesitation, and have no right to do otherwise. But as to your father's estate, I am placed in a delicate position, by reason of my trusteeship; and it is possible that I might go wrong; at any rate, I must consult——"

"Mrs. Fox, sir, from Foxden!" Thyatira Muggridge cried, with her face as red as a turkey's wattles, and throwing the door of the humble back-room as wide as if it never could be wide enough. For the lady was beautifully arrayed.

"I come to consult, not to be consulted. My confidence in myself has been misplaced;" said the mother of Jemmy and Christie, after making the due salutation. "Sir Thomas, I beg you not to go. You have some right to a voice in the matter; if as they tell me at Old Barn, you have conquered your repugnance to my son, and are ready to receive him as your brother-in-law."

"Madam, I was a fool," said Tom, offering his great hand with a sheepish look. "Your son has forgiven me; and I hope that

you will. Jemmy is the finest fellow ever born."

"A credit to his mother, as his mother always thought. And what is still better for himself, a happy man, in winning the affections of the sweetest girl on earth. I have seen your dear sister—what a gentle darling!"

"Nicie is very well in her way, madam. But she has a strong will of her own. Jemmy will find that out, some day. Upon the whole, I am sorry for him."

"He talks in the very same way of his sister. If young men listened to young men, none of them would ever marry. Oh, Mr. Penniloe, you can be trusted at any rate, to look at things from a higher point of view."

"I try sometimes; but it is not easy. And I generally get into scrapes, when I do. But I have one consolation. Nobody ever takes my advice."

"I mean to take it," Mrs. Fox replied, looking into his gentle eyes, with the faith which clever women feel in a nature larger than their own. "You need not suppose that I am impulsive. But I know what you are. When every one else in this stupid little place condemned my son, without hearing a word, there was one who was too noble, too good

a Christian, to listen to any reason. He was right, when the mother herself was wrong. For I don't mind telling you, as I have even told my son, that knowing what he is, I could not help suspecting that he—that he had something to do with it. Not that Lady Waldron had any right whatever—and it will take me a long time to forgive her, and her son is quite welcome to tell her that. What you felt yourself was quite different, Sir Thomas.”

“I can't see that my mother did any harm. Why, she even suspected her own twin-brother! If you were to bear ill-will against my mother——”

“Of such little tricks I am incapable, Sir Thomas. And of course I can allow for foreigners. Even twenty years of English life cannot bring them to see things as we do. Their nature is so—well, I won't say narrow. Neither will I say ‘bigoted,’ although——”

“We quite understand you, my dear madam.” Mr. Penniloe was shocked at his own rudeness, in thus interrupting a lady, but he knew that very little more would produce a bad breach betwixt Walderscourt and Foxden. “What a difference really does exist among people equally just and upright——”

“My dear mother is as just and upright as any Englishwoman in the world, Protestant or Catholic,” the young man exclaimed, having temper on the bubble, yet not allowing it to boil against a lady. “But if his own mother condemned him, how—I can’t put it into words, as I mean it—how can she be in a wax with my mother? And more than that—as it happens, Mrs. Fox, my mother starts for Spain to-day, and I cannot let her go alone.”

“Now the Lord must have ordered it so,” thought the Parson. “What a clearance of hostile elements!” But fearing that the others might not so take it, he said only—“Ah, indeed!”

“To her native land?” asked Mrs. Fox, as a Protestant not quite unbigoted; and a woman who longed to have it out. “It seems an extraordinary thing just now. But perhaps it is a pilgrimage.”

“Yes, madam, for about £500,000,” answered Sir Thomas, in his youthful Tory vein, not emancipated yet from disdain of commerce; “not for the sake of the money, of course; but to do justice to the brother she had wronged. Mr. Penniloe can tell you all about it. I am not much of a hand at arithmetic.”

“We won’t trouble any one about that

now;" the lady replied with some loftiness. "But I presume that Lady Waldron would wish to see me, before she leaves this country."

"Certainly she would if she had known that you were here. My sister had not come back yet, to tell her. She will be disappointed terribly, when she hears that you have been at Perlycross. But she is compelled to catch the Packet; and I fear that I must say 'good-bye'; mother would never forgive me, if she lost her voyage through any fault of mine."

"You see how they treat us!" said Mrs. Fox of Foxlen, when the young man had made his adieu with great politeness. "I suppose you understand it, Mr. Penniloe, though your mind is so very much larger?"

The clergyman scarcely knew what to say. He was not at all quick in the ways of the world; and all feminine rush was beyond him. "We must all allow for circumstances," was his quiet platitude.

"All possible allowance I can make;" the lady replied with much self-command. "But I think there is nothing more despicable than this small County-family feeling? Is Lady Waldron not aware that I am connected with the very foremost of your Devonshire families? But because my husband is engaged in com-

merce, a military race may look down upon us! After all, I should like to know, what are your proudest landowners, but mere agriculturists by deputy? I never lose my temper; but it makes me laugh, when I remember that after all, they are simply dependent upon farming. Is not that what it comes to, Mr. Penniloe?"

"And a very noble occupation, madam. The first and the finest of the ways ordained by the Lord for the sustenance of mankind. Next to the care of the human soul, what vocation can be——"

"You think so. Then I tell you what I'll do, if only to let those Waldrons know how little we care for their prejudices. Every thing depends upon me now, in my poor husband's sad condition. I will give my consent to my daughter's alliance—great people call it *alliance*, don't they?—with a young man, who is a mere farmer!"

"I am assured that he will make his way," Mr. Penniloe answered with some inward smile, for it is a pleasant path to follow in the track of ladies. "He gets a higher price for pigs, than either of my Churchwardens."

"What could you desire more than that? It is a proof of the highest capacity. Mr. and

Mrs. Frank Gilham shall send their wedding-cards to Walderscourt, with a prime young porker engraved on them. Oh, Mr. Penniloe, I am not perfect. But I have an unusual gift perhaps of largeness of mind, and common sense; and I always go against any one, who endeavours to get the whip-hand of me. And I do believe my darling Christie gets it from her mother."

"She is a most charming young lady, Mrs. Fox. What a treasure she would be in this parish! The other day, she said a thing about our Church——"

"Just like her. She is always doing that. And when she comes into her own money—but that is a low consideration. It is gratitude, my dear sir, the deepest and the noblest feeling that still survives in these latter days. Without that heroic young man's behaviour, which has partly disabled him for life, I fear, I should have neither son nor daughter. And you say that the Gilhams are of very good birth?"

"The true name is *Guillaume*, I believe. Their ancestor came with the Conqueror. Not as a rapacious noble, but in a most useful and peaceful vocation; in fact——"

"Quite enough, Mr. Penniloe. In such a case, one scorns particulars. My daughter was

sure that it was so. But I doubted ; although you can see it in his bearing. A more thoroughly modest young man never breathed ; but I shall try to make him not afraid of me. He told my daughter that, in his opinion, I realised—but you would think me vain ; and I was justly annoyed at such nonsense. However, since I have had your advice, I shall hesitate no longer.”

Mrs. Fox smiled pleasantly, because her mind was quite made up, to save herself a world of useless trouble in this matter, and yet appear to take the upper hand in her surrender.

Wondering what advice he could have been supposed to give, the mild yet gallant Parson led her to the Foxden carriage, which had halted at his outer gate, and opposite the school-house. Here with many a bow they parted, thinking well of one another, and hoping for the like regard. But as the gentle curate passed the mouth of the Tænarian tunnel leading to his lower realms, a great surprise befell him.

“What has happened ? There is something wrong. Surely at this time of day, one ought to see the sunset through that hole,” he communed with himself in wonder, for the dark arcade ran from east to west. “There must

be a stoppage somewhere. I am almost sure I can see two heads. Good people, come out, whoever you may be."

"The fact of it is, sir," said Sergeant Jakes, marching out of the hole with great dignity, though his hat was white with cob-webs; "the fact of it is that this good lady hath received a sudden shock——"

"No sir, no sir. Not at all like that, sir. Only as St. Paul saith in chapter 5 of Ephesians —'this is a great mystery.'"

"It is indeed. And I must request to have it explained immediately."

Thyatira's blushes and the sparkling of her eyes made her look quite pretty, and almost as good as young again, while she turned away with a final shot from the locker of old authority.

"You ought to be ashamed, sir, according to my thinking, to be standing in this wind so long, without no hat upon your head."

"You see, sir, it is just like this," the gallant sergeant followed up, when his love was out of hearing; "time hath come for Mrs. Muggridge to be married, now or never. It is not for me to say, as a man who fears the Lord, that I think He was altogether right in the institooting of wedlock, supposing as ever He

did so. But whether He did it, or whether He did not, the thing hath been so taken up by the humankind—women particular—that for a man getting on in years, 'tis the only thing respectable. Thyatira hath proven that out of the Bible, many times.”

“Mr. Jakes, the proper thing is to search the Scriptures for yourself.”

“So Thyatira saith. But Lord! She findeth me wrong at every text, from looking up to women so. If she holdeth by St. Paul, a quarter so much as she quoteth him, there won't be another man in Perlycross with such a home as I shall have.”

“You have chosen one of the few wise virgins. Jakes, I trust that you will be blest not only with a happy home in this world, but what is a thousand-fold more important, the aid of a truly religious wife, to lead a thoroughly humble, prayerful, and consistent Christian life.”

“Thank 'e, sir. Thank 'e. With the grace of God, she will; and my first prayer to the Lord in heaven will be just this—to let me live long enough for to see that young fool of a Bob the butcher ahanging from his own steelyard. By reason of the idiot he hath made of his self, by marrying of that silly minx, Tamar Haddon!”

“The grace of God is boundless; and Tamar may improve. Try to make the best of her, Mr. Jakes. She will always look up to you, I am sure, feeling the strength of your character, and the example of higher principles.”

“She!” replied the sergeant without a blush, but after a keen reconnoitring glance. “The likes of her doesn’t get no benefit from example. But I must not keep you, sir, so long without your hat on.”

“This is a day of many strange events,” Mr. Penniloe began to meditate, as he leaned back in his long sermon-chair, with the shadows of the Spring night deepening. “Lady Waldron gone, to support her brother’s case in Spain, because she had so wronged him. A thousand pounds suddenly forthcoming, to lift us out of our affliction; sweet Nicie left in the charge of Mrs. Webber, who comes to live at Walderscourt; Christie Fox allowed to have her own way, as she was pretty sure to do; and now Thyatira, Thyatira Muggridge, not content to lead a quiet, useful, respectable, Christian, and well-paid life, but launched into matrimony with a man of many stripes! I know not how the school will be conducted, or my own household, if it comes to that. Truly, when a clergyman is left without a wife——”

"I want to come in, and the door won't open"—a clear but impatient voice was heard—"I want to see you, before anybody else does." And then another shake was given.

"Why, Zip, my dear child! Zip, don't be so headlong. I thought you were learning self-command. Why, how have you come? What is the meaning of all this?"

"Well, now they may kill me, if they like. I told them I would hear your voice again, and then they might skin me, if it suited them. I won't have their religion. There is none of it inside them. You are the only one I ever saw, that God has made with His eyes open. I like them very well, but what are they to you? Why, they won't let me speak as I was made! It is no good sending me away again. Parson, you mustn't stand up like that. Can't you see that I want to kiss you?"

"My dear little child, with all my heart. But I never saw any one half so——"

"Half so what? I don't care what, so long as I have got you round the neck," cried the child as she covered his face with kisses, drawing back every now and then, to look into his calm blue eyes with flashes of adoration. "The Lord should have made me your child, instead of that well-conducted waxy thing—

look at my nails! She had better not come now."

"Alas! Have you cultivated nothing but your nails? But why did the good ladies send you home so soon? They said they would keep you until Whitsuntide."

"I got a punishment on purpose, and I let the old girls go to dinner. Then I said the Lord's Prayer, and slipped down the back stairs."

"And you plodded more than twenty miles alone! Oh Zip, what a difficult thing it will be to guile you into the ways of peace!"

"They say I talks broad a bit still sometimes, and they gives me ever so much roilying. But I'd sit up all night with a cork in my mouth, if so be, I could plaize 'e, Parson."

"You must want something better than a cork, my dear"—vexed as he was, Mr. Penniloe admired the vigorous growth and high spirit of the child—"after twenty-two miles of our up and down roads. Now go to Mrs. Muggridge, but remember one thing—if you are unkind to my little Fay, how can you expect me to be kind to you?"

"Not a very lofty way for me to put it," he reflected, while Zip was being cared for in the kitchen; "but what am I to do with that

strange child? If the girl is mother to the woman, she will be none of the choir Angelic, contented with duty, and hymns of repose. If 'nature maketh nadders,' as our good people say, Zippy * hath more of sting than sugar in her bowl."

But when the present moment thrives, and life is warm and active, and those in whom we take delight are prosperous and happy, what is there why we should not smile, and keep in tune with all around, and find the flavour of the world returning to our relish? This may not be of the noblest style of thinking, or of living; but he who would, in his little way, rather help than harm his fellows, soon finds out that it cannot be done by carping and girding at them. By intimacy with their lower parts, and rank insistence on them, one may for himself obtain some power, yielded by a hateful shame. But who esteems him, who is better for his fetid labours, who would go to him for comfort when the world is waning, who—though in his home he may be loveable—can love him?

Mr. Penniloe was not of those who mount mankind by lowering it. From year to year his influence grew, as grows a tree in the back-

* This proved too true, as may be shown hereafter.

wood age, that neither shuns nor defies the storm. Though certain persons opposed him still—as happens to every active man—there was not one of them that did not think all the others wrong in doing so. For instance Lady Waldron, when she returned with her son from Spain, thought Mrs. Fox by no means reasonable, and Mrs. Fox thought Lady Waldron anything but sensible, when either of them differed with the clergyman and the other. For verily it was a harder thing to settle all the important points concerning Nicie and Jeminy Fox, than to come to a perfect understanding in the case of Christie and Frank Gilham.

However the parish was pleased at last to hear that everything had been arranged; and a mighty day it was to be for all that pleasant neighbourhood, although no doubt a quiet, and as every one hoped, a sober one. On account of her father's sad condition, Christie as well as Nicie, was to make her vows in the grand old church, which was not wholly finished yet, because there was so much more to do, through the fine influx of money. Currency is so called perhaps, not only because it runs away so fast, but also because it runs together; the prefix being omitted through our warm affection and longing for the terms of familiarity. At any

rate the Parson and the stout Churchwardens of Perlycross had just received another hundred pounds when the following interview came to pass.

It was on the bank of the crystal Perle, at the place where the Priestwell brook glides in, and a single plank without a handrail crosses it into the meads below. Here are some stickles of good speed, and right complexion, for the fly to float quietly into a dainty mouth, and produce a fine fry in the evening; and here, if any man rejoice not in the gentle art, yet may he find sweet comfort and release of worldly trouble, by sitting softly on the bank, and letting all the birds sing to him, and all the flowers fill the air, and all the little waves go by, as his own anxieties have gone.

Sometimes Mr. Penniloe, whenever he could spare the time, allowed his heart to go up to heaven, where his soul was waiting for it and wondering at its little cares. And so on this fair morning of the May, here he sat upon a bank of Spring, gazing at the gliding water through the mute salaam of twigs.

“Reverend, I congratulate you. Never heard of a finer hit. A solid hundred out of Gowler! Never bet with a parson, eh? I thought he knew the world too well.”

A few months back and the clergyman would have risen very stiffly, and kept his distance from this joke. But now he had a genuine liking for this "Godless Gronow," and knew that his mind was the worst part of him.

"Doctor, you know that it was no bet;" he said, as he shook hands heartily. "Nevertheless I feel some doubts about accepting ——"

"You can't help it. The money is not for yourself, and you rob the Church, if you refuse it. The joke of it is that I saw through the mill-stone, where that conceited fellow failed. Come now, as you are a sporting man, I'll bet you a crown that I catch a trout in this little stickle above the plank."

"Done!" cried Mr. Penniloe, forgetting his position, but observing Gronow's as he whirled his flies.

The doctor threshed heartily, and at his very best; even bending his back as he had seen Pike do, and screwing up his lips, and keeping, in a strict line with his line, his body and his mind and whole existence.

Mr. Penniloe's face wore an amiable smile, as he watched the intensity of his friend. Crowns in his private purse were few and far between, and if he should attain one by the present venture, it would simply go into the poor-box;

yet such was his sympathy with human nature that he hoped against hope to see a little trout pulled out. But the willows bowed sweetly, and the wind went by, and the water flowed on, with all its clever children safe.

“Here you are, Reverend!” said the philosophic Gronow, pulling out his cart-wheel like a man; “you can’t make them take you when they don’t choose, can you? But I’ll make them pay out for it, when they begin to rise.”

“The fact of it is that you are too skilful, doctor; and you let them see so much of you that they feel it in their hearts.”

“There may be truth in that. But my own idea is, that I manage to instil into my flies too keen a sense of their own dependence upon me. Now what am I to do? I must have a dish and a good dish too of trout, for this evening’s supper. You know the honour and the pleasure I am to have of giving the last bachelor and maiden feast to the heroes and heroines of to-morrow, Nicie and Jemmy Fox, Christie and Frank Gilham. Their people are glad to be quit of them in the fuss, and they are too glad to be out of it. None of your imported stuff for me. Nothing is to be allowed upon the table, unless it is the produce of our own parish. A fine fore-quarter, and a ripe

sirloin, my own asparagus, and lettuce, and sea-kail, and frame-potatoes in their jackets. Stewed pears and clotted cream, grapes, and a pine-apple (coming of course from Walderscourt)—oh Reverend, what a good man you would be, if you only knew what is good to eat!”

“But I do. And I shall know still better by and by. I understood that I was kindly invited.”

“To be sure, and one of the most important. But I must look sharp, or I shall never get the fish. By the by, you couldn’t take the rod for half an hour, could you? I hear that you have been a fine hand at it.”

Mr. Penniloe stood with his hand upon a burr-knot of oak, and looked at the fishing-rod. If it had been a good, homely, hard-working, and plain-living bit of stuff, such as Saint Peter might have swung upon the banks of Jordan, haply the parson might have yielded to the sweet temptation. For here within a few clicks of reel was goodly choice of many waters, various as the weather—placid glides of middle currents rippling off towards either bank, petulant swerves from stone, or bole, with a plashing and a murmur and a gurgling from below, and then a spread of quiet dimples deepening to a limpid pool. Taking all the twists and turns

of river Perle and Priestwell brook, there must have been a mile of water in two flowery meadows, water bright with stickle-runs, gloomy with still corners, or quivering with crafty hovers where a king of fish might dwell.

But lo, the king of fishermen, or at least the young prince was coming! The doctor caught the parson's sleeve, and his face assumed its worst expression, perhaps its usual one before he took to Church-going and fly-fishing.

"Just look! Over there, by that wild cherry-tree!" He whispered very fiercely. "I am sure it's that sneak of a Pike once more. Come into this bush, and watch him. I thought he was gone to Oxford. Why, I never saw him fishing once last week."

"Pike is no sneak, but a very honest fellow," his tutor answered warmly. "But I was obliged by a sad offence of his to stop him from handling the rod last week. He begged me to lay it on his back instead. The poor boy scarcely took a bit of food. He will never forget that punishment."

"Well he seems to be making up for it now. What luck he has, and I get none!"

Mr. Penniloe smiled as his favourite pupil crossed the Perle towards them. He was not wading—in such small waters there is no

necessity for that—but stepping lightly from pile to pile, and slab to slab, where the relics of an ancient weir stood above the flashing river. Whistling softly, and calmly watching every curl and ripple, he was throwing a long line up the stream, while his flies were flitting as if human genius had turned them in their posthumous condition into moths. His rod showed not a glance of light, but from spike to top-ring quivered with the vigilance of death.

While the envious Gronow watched, with bated breath and teeth set hard, two or three merry little trout were taught what they were made for; then in a soft swirl near the bank that dimpled like a maiden's cheek, an excellent fish with a yellow belly bravely made room in it for something choice. Before he had smacked his lips thoroughly, behold another fly of wondrous beauty—laced with silver, azure-pinioned, and with an exquisite curl of tail—came fluttering through the golden world so marvellous to the race below. The poor fly shuddered at the giddy gulf, then folded his wings and fell helpless. "I have thee," exclaimed the trout,—but ah! more truly the same thing said the Pike. A gallant struggle, a thrilling minute, silvery dashes, and golden rolls, and there between Dr. Gronow's feet lay

upon Dr. Gronow's land a visitor he would have given half the meadow to have placed there.

"Don't touch him," said Pike, in the calmest manner; "or you'll be sure to let him in again. He will turn the pound handsomely, don't you think?"

"A cool hand, truly, this pupil of yours!" quoth the doctor to the parson. "To consult me about the weight of my own fish, and then put him in his basket! Young man, this meadow belongs to me."

"Yes, sir, I dare say; but the fish don't live altogether in the meadow. And I never heard that you preserve the Perle. Priestwell brook you do, I know. But I don't want to go there, if I might."

"I dare say. Perhaps the grapes are sour. Never mind; let us see how you have done. I find them taking rather short to-day. Why, you don't mean to say you have caught all those!"

"I ought to have done better," said the modest Pike, "but I lost two very nice fish by being in too much of a hurry. That comes of being stopped from it all last week. But I see you have not been lucky yet. You are welcome to these, sir, if Mr. Penniloe does not

want them. By strict right, I dare say they belong to you."

"Not one of them, Mr. Pike. But you are very generous. I hope to catch a basketful very shortly—still, it is just possible that this may not occur. I will take them provisionally, and with many thanks. Now, will you add to the obligation, by telling, if your tutor has no objection, why he put you under such an awful veto?"

"My boy, you are welcome to tell Dr. Gronow. It was only a bit of thoughtlessness, and your punishment has been severe."

"I shall never touch cobbler's wax again on Sunday. But I wanted to finish a May-fly entirely of my own pattern; and so after church I was touching up his wings, when in comes Mr. Penniloe with his London glasses on."

"And I am proud to assure you, Dr. Gronow, that the lad never tried to deceive me. I should have been deeply pained, if he had striven to conceal it."

"Well done! That speaks well for both of you. Pike, you are a straight-forward fellow. You shall have a day on my brook once a week. Is there anything more I can do for you?"

“Yes sir, unless it is too much to ask; and perhaps Mr. Penniloe would like to hear it too. Hopper and I have had many talks about it; and he says that I am superstitious. But his plan of things is to cut for his life over everything that he can see, without stopping once to look at it. And when he has jumped over it, he has no more idea what it was, than if he had run under it. He has no faith in anything that he does not see, and he never sees much of anything.”

“Ha, Master Pike. You describe it well;” said the doctor, looking at him with much interest. “Scepticism without enquiry. Reverend, that Hop-jumper is not the right stuff for a bishop.”

“If you please, Dr. Gronow, we will not discuss that now,” the parson replied with a glance at young Pike, which the doctor understood and heeded: “What is it, my boy, that you would ask of Dr. Gronow, after serious debate with Peckover?”

“Nothing sir, nothing. Only we would like to know, if it is not disagreeable to any one, how he could have managed from the very first to understand all about Sir Thomas Waldron, and to know that we were all making fools of ourselves. I say that he must have

seen a dream, like Jacob, or have been cast into a vision, like so many other saints. But Hopper says no; if there was any inspiration, Dr. Gronow was more likely to have got it from the Devil."

"Come now, Pike, and Hopper too,—if he were here to fly my brook,—I call that very unfair of you. No, it was not you who said it; I can quite believe that. No fisherman reviles his brother. But you should have given him the spike, my friend. Reverend, is this all the theology you teach? Well, there is one answer as to how I knew it, and a very short one—the little word, *brains*."

Mr. Penniloe smiled a pleasant smile, and simply said, "Ah!" in his accustomed tone, which everybody liked for its sympathy and good faith. But Pike took up his rod, and waved his flies about, and answered very gravely—"It must be something more than that."

"No, sir," said the doctor, looking down at him complacently, and giving a little tap to his grizzled forehead; "it was all done here, sir—just a trifling bit of brains."

"But there never can have been such brains before;" replied Pike with an angler's persistence. "Why everybody else was a thousand

miles astray, and yet Dr. Gronow hit the mark at once ! ”

“ It is a little humble knack he has, sir. Just a little gift of thinking,” the owner of all this wisdom spoke as if he were half-ashamed of it ; “ from his earliest days it has been so. Nothing whatever to be proud of, and sometimes even a trouble to him, when others require to be set right. But how can one help it, Master Pike ? There is the power, and it must be used. Mr. Penniloe will tell you that.”

“ All knowledge is from above,” replied the gentleman thus appealed to ; “ and beyond all question it is the duty of those who have this precious gift, to employ it for the good of others.”

“ Young man ; there is a moral lesson for you. When wiser people set you right, be thankful and be humble. That has been my practice always, though I have not found many occasions for it.”

Pike was evidently much impressed, and looked with reverence at both his elders. “ Perhaps then,” he said, with a little hesitation and the bright blush of ingenuous youth, “ I ought to set Dr. Gronow right in a little mistake he is making.”

"If such a thing be possible, of course you should," his tutor replied with a smile of surprise; while the doctor recovered his breath, made a bow, and said, "Sir, will you point out my error?"

"Here it is, sir," quoth Pike, with the certainty of truth overcoming his young diffidence, "this wire-apparatus in your brook—a very clever thing; what is the object of it?"

"My *Ichthyophylax*? A noble idea that has puzzled all the parish. A sort of a grill that only works one way. It keeps all my fish from going down to my neighbours, and yet allows theirs to come up to me; and when they come up, they can never get back. At the other end of my property, I have the same contrivance inverted, so that all the fish come down to me, but none of them can go up again. I saw the thing offered in a sporting paper, and paid a lot of money for it in London. Reverend, isn't it a grand invention? It intercepts them all, like a sluice-gate."

"Extremely ingenious, no doubt," replied the parson. "But is not it what a fair-minded person would consider rather selfish?"

"Not at all. They would like to have my fish, if they could; and so I anticipate them,

and get theirs. Quite the rule of the Scriptures, Reverend."

"I think that I have read a text," said Master Pike, stroking his long chin, and not quite sure that he quoted aright; "the snare which he laid for others, in the same are his own feet taken!"

"A very fine text," replied Dr. Gronow, with one of his most sarcastic smiles; "and the special favourite of the Lord must have realized it too often. But what has that to do with my *Ichthyophylax*?"

"Nothing, sir. Only that you have set it so that it works in the wrong direction. All the fish go out, but they can't come back. And if it is so at the upper end, no wonder that you catch nothing."

"Can I ever call any man a fool again?" cried the doctor, when thoroughly convinced.

"Perhaps that disability will be no loss;" Mr. Penniloe answered quietly.

THE END.

